


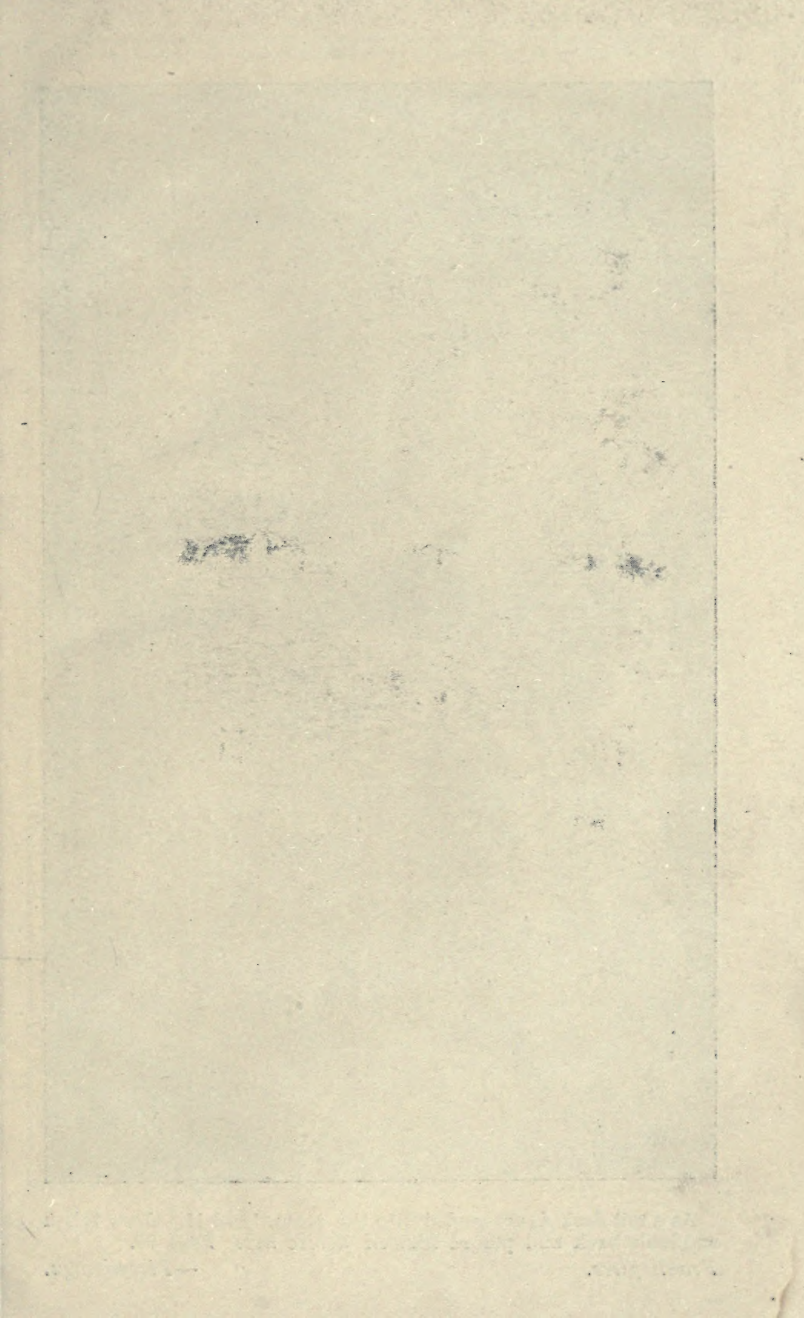
TICONDEROGA



By G. P. R. JAMES



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As a tall dark figure glided into the room, Lord H.—drew Edith suddenly back and placed himself before her. Page 99.

Frontispiece.

—*Ticonderoga.*

Ticonderoga

*A Story of Early Frontier Life
in the Mohawk Valley*

By G. P. R. JAMES

*Author of "Darnley, A Romance of the times
of Henry VIII.," "Richelieu, A Tale of
France in the Reign of King Louis XIII."*



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TICONDEROGA

CHAPTER I

THE house was a neat, though a lowly one. It bore traces of newness, for the bark on the trunks which supported the little veranda had not yet mouldered away. Nevertheless, it was not built by the owner's own hands; for when he came there he had much to learn in the rougher arts of life; but with a carpenter from a village some nine miles off, he had aided to raise the building and directed the construction by his own taste. The result was satisfactory to him; and, what was more, in his eyes, was satisfactory to the two whom he loved best—at least, it seemed satisfactory to them, although those who knew them, even not so well as he did, might have doubted, and yet loved them all the better.

The door of the house was open, and custom admitted every visitor freely, whatever was his errand. It was a strange state of society that, in which men, though taught by daily experience that precaution was necessary, took none. They held themselves occasionally ready to repel open assault, which was rare, and neglected every safeguard against insidious attack, which was much more common.

It was the custom of the few who visited that secluded spot to enter without ceremony, and to search in any or every room in the house for some one of the inhabitants. But on this occasion the horse that came up the road stopped at the gate of the little fence, and the traveler,

whoever he was, when he reached the door after dismounting, knocked with his whip before he entered.

The master of the house rose and went to the door. He was somewhat impatient of ceremony, but the aspect and demeanor of his visitor were not of a kind to nourish any angry feeling. He was a young and very handsome man, probably not more than thirty years of age, sinewy and well formed in person, with a noble and commanding countenance, a broad, high brow, and a keen but tranquil eye. His manner was courteous, but grave, and he said, without waiting to have his errand asked: "I know not, sir, whether I shall intrude upon you too far in asking hospitality for the night, but the sun is going down, and I was told by a lad whom I met in the woods just now that there is no other house for ten miles farther; and, to say the truth, I am very ignorant of the way."

"Come in," said the master of the cottage. "We never refuse to receive a visitor here, and, indeed, have sometimes to accommodate more than the house will well hold. We are alone, however, now, and you will not have to put up with the inconveniences which our guests are sometimes obliged to encounter. Stay! I will order your horse to be taken care of."

Thus saying, he advanced a step or two beyond the door and called in a loud voice for someone whom he named Agrippa. He had to shout more than once, however, before a negro appeared, blind in one eye, and somewhat lame withal, but yet, apparently, both active and intelligent. The necessary orders were soon given, and in a moment after the traveler was seated with his host in the little parlor of the cottage. The manner of the latter could not be called cordial, though it was polite and courteous.

The other seemed to feel it in some degree, and a certain stateliness appeared in his demeanor which was not likely to warm his host into greater familiarity. But suddenly the chilly atmosphere of the room was warmed in a moment, and a chain of sympathy established between the two

by the presence of youth. A boy of sixteen, and a girl a little more than a year older, entered with gay and sunny looks, and the cloud was dispelled in a moment.

"My daughter Edith—my son Walter," said the master of the house, addressing the stranger, as the two young people bounded in; and then he added, with a slight inclination of the head: "It was an ancient and honorable custom in Scotland, when that country was almost as uncivilized as this, and possessed all the uncivilized virtues, never to inquire the name of a guest; and therefore I cannot introduce you to my children; but doubtless they will soon acknowledge you as their nameless friend."

"I am a friend of one of them already," answered the stranger, holding out his hand to the lad. "This is the young gentleman who told me that I should find the only house within ten miles about this spot, and his father willing to receive me, though he did not say that I should find a gem in the wilderness, and a gentleman in these wild woods."

"It has been a foolish fancy, perhaps," said the master of the house, "to carry almost into the midst of savage life some remnants of civilization. We keep the portraits of dead friends—a lock of hair—a trinket—a garment of the loved and departed. The habits and the ornaments of another state of society are to me like those friends, and I long to have some of their relics near me."

"Oh, my dear father," said Edith, seating herself by him and leaning her head upon his bosom, without timidity or restraint, "you could never do without them. I remember when we were coming hither, now three years ago, that you talked a great deal of free, unshackled existence; but I knew quite well, even then, that you could not be content till you had subdued the rough things around you to a more refined state."

"What made you think so, Edith?" asked her father, looking down at her with a smile.

"Because you never could bear the parson of the parish

drinking punch and smoking tobacco pipes," answered the beautiful girl, with a laugh; "and I was quite sure that it was not more savage life you sought, but greater refinement."

"Oh, yes, my father," added the lad; "and you often said, when we were in England, that the red Indian had much more of the real gentleman in him than many a peer."

"Dreams, dreams," said their father, with a melancholy smile; and then, turning to the stranger, he added: "You see, sir, how keenly our weaknesses are read by even children. But come, Edith, our friend must be hungry with his long ride; see and hasten the supper. Our habits are primeval here, sir, like our woods. We follow the sun to bed, and wake with him in the morning."

"They are good habits," answered the stranger, "and such as I am accustomed to follow much myself. But do not, I pray you, hasten your supper for me. I am anything but a slave of times and seasons. I can fast long, and fare scantily, without inconvenience."

"And yet you are an Englishman," answered the master of the house, gravely, "a soldier, or I mistake; a man of station, I am sure; though all three would generally infer, as the world goes at this present time, a fondness for luxurious ease and an indulgence of all the appetites."

A slight flush came into his young companion's cheek, and the other hastened to add: "Believe me, I meant nothing discourteous. I spoke of the Englishman, the soldier, and the man of rank and station generally, not of yourself. I see it is far otherwise with you."

"You hit hard, my good friend," replied the stranger, "and there is some truth in what you say. But perhaps I have seen as many lands as you, and I boldly venture to pronounce that the fault is in the age, not in the nation, the profession, or the class."

As he spoke he rose, walked thoughtfully to the window, and gazed out for a moment or two in silence; and then,

turning round, he said, addressing his host's son: "How beautifully the setting sun shines down yonder glade in the forest, pouring, as it were, in a golden mist through the needle foliage of the pines. Runs there a road down there?"

The boy answered in the affirmative, and drawing close to the stranger's side pointed out to him, by the undulation of the ground and the gaps in the tree tops, the wavy line that the road followed, down the side of the gentle hill, saying: "By a white oak and a great hemlock tree, there is a footpath to the left; at a clump of large cedars on the edge of the swamp the road forks out to the right and left, one leading eastward toward the river, and one out westward to the hunting grounds."

The stranger seemed to listen to him with pleasure, often turning his eyes to the lad's face as he spoke, rather than to the landscape to which he pointed; and when he had done he laid his hand on his shoulder, saying, "I wish I had such a guide as you, Walter, for my onward journey."

"Will it be far?" asked the youth.

"Good faith, I cannot well tell," answered the other. "It may be as far as Montreal, or even to Quebec, if I get not satisfaction soon."

"I could not guide you as far as that," replied the boy, "but I know every step toward the lakes, as well as an Indian."

"With whom he is very fond of consorting," said his father, with a smile.

But before the conversation could proceed farther, an elderly, respectable woman servant entered the room and announced that supper was on the table. Edith had not returned, but they found her in a large, oblong chamber to which the master of the house led the way. There was a long table in the midst, and four wooden chairs arranged round one end, over which a snowy tablecloth was spread. The rest of the table was bare, but there were a number of other seats and two or three benches in the room, while

at equal distances on either side, touching the walls, lay a number of bear and buffalo skins, as if spread out for beds.

The eye of the stranger glanced over them as he entered, but his host replied to his thoughts, with a smile: "We will lodge you somewhat better than that, sir. We have, just now, more than one room vacant; but you must know there is no such thing as privacy in this land, and when we have any invasion of our Indian friends those skins make them supremely happy. I often smile to think how a redman would feel in Holland sheets. I tried it once, but it did not succeed. He pulled the blankets off the bed and slept upon the floor."

Seated at the table, the conversation turned to many subjects, general, of course, but yet personally interesting to both the elder members of the party.

More than an hour was beguiled at the table—a longer period than ordinary—and then the bright purple hues which spread over the eastern wall of the room, opposite the windows, told that the autumnal sun had reached the horizon. The master of the house rose to lead the way into another room again, but ere he moved from the table another figure was added to the group around it, though the foot was so noiseless that no one heard its entrance into the chamber.

The person who had joined the little party was a man of middle age, of a tall, commanding figure, upright and dignified carriage, and fine, but somewhat strongly marked features. The expression of his countenance was grave and noble, but yet there was a certain strangeness in it—a touch of wildness, perhaps I might call it—very difficult to define. It was not in the eyes, for they were good, calm, and steadfast, gazing straight at any object of contemplation, and fixed full upon the face of anyone he addressed. It was not in the lips, for, except when speaking, they were firm and motionless. Perhaps it was in the eye-

brow, which, thick and strongly marked, was occasionally suddenly raised or depressed, without apparent cause.

His dress was very strange. He was evidently of European blood, although his skin was embrowned by much exposure to sun and weather. But yet he wore not altogether the European costume, the garb of the American backwoodsman, or that of the Indian. There was a mixture of all, which gave him a wild and fantastic appearance. His coat was evidently English, and had straps of gold lace upon the shoulders; his knee breeches and high riding boots would have looked English, also, had not the latter been destitute of soles, properly so called; for they were made somewhat like a stocking, and the part beneath the foot was of the same leather as the rest. Over his shoulder was a belt of rattlesnake skin, and round his waist a sort of girdle, formed from the claws of the bear, from which depended a string of wampum, while two or three knives and a small tomahawk appeared on either side. No other weapons had he whatever. But under his left arm hung a common powder flask, made of cow's horn, and beside it, a sort of wallet, such as trappers commonly used for carrying their little store of Indian corn. A round fur cap of bear-skin, without any ornament whatever, completed his habiliments.

It would seem that in that house he was well known, for its master instantly held forth his hand to him, and the young people sprang forward and greeted him warmly. A full minute elapsed before he spoke, but nobody uttered a word till he did so, all seeming to understand his habits.

"Well, Mr. Prevost," he said, at length, "I have been a stranger to your wigwam for some time. How art thou, Walter? Not a man yet, in spite of all thou canst do? Edith, my sweet lady, time deals differently with thee from thy brother. He makes thee a woman against thy will." Then turning suddenly to the stranger, he said: "Sir, I am glad to see you. Were you ever at Kielmansegge?"

"Once," replied the stranger, laconically.

"Then we will confer presently," replied the newcomer. "How have you been this many a day, Mr. Prevost? You must give me food, for I have ridden far. I will have that bearskin, too, for my night's lodging place, if it be not pre-engaged. No, not that one, the next. I have told Agrippa to see to my horse, for I ever count upon your courtesy."

There was something extremely stately and dignified in his whole tone, and with frank straightforwardness, but without any indecorous haste, he seated himself at the table, drew toward him a large dish of cold meat, and while Edith and her brother hastened to supply him with everything else he needed, proceeded to help himself liberally to whatever was within his reach. Not a word more did he speak for several minutes, while Mr. Prevost and his guest stood looking on in silence, and the two young people attended the newcomer at the table.

As soon as he had done he rose abruptly, and then, looking first to Mr. Prevost, and next to the stranger, said: "Now, gentlemen, if you please, we will to council."

The stranger hesitated, and Mr. Prevost answered, with a smile: "I am not of the initiated, Sir William; but I and the children will leave you with my guest, whom you seem to know, but of whose name* and station I am ignorant."

"Stay! stay!" replied the other, to whom he spoke. "We shall need not only your advice but your concurrence. This gentleman I will answer for as a faithful and loyal subject of his majesty King George. He has been treated with that hardest of all treatments—neglect. But his is a spirit in which not even neglect can drown out loyalty to his king and love to his country. Moreover, I may say, that the neglect which he has met with has proceeded from a deficiency in his own nature. God, unfortunately, did not

* This English officer, whom the author, through the story, thinly disguises under the title "Lord H.," will be readily recognized by the reader as that Lord Howe who met his death at Ticonderoga.

make him a grumbler, or he would have been a peer long ago. The Almighty endowed him with all the qualities that could benefit his fellow creatures, but denied him those which were necessary to advance himself. Others have wondered that he never met with honors, or distinction, or reward. I wonder not at all; for he is neither a charlatan, nor a coxcomb, nor a pertinacious beggar. He cannot stoop to slabber the hand of power, nor lick the spittle of the man in office. How can such a man have advancement? It is contrary to the course of the things of this world. But as he has loved his fellow men, so will he love them. As he has served his country, so will he serve it. As he has sought honor and truth more than promotion, honor and truth will be his reward—alas! that it should be the only one. But when he dies, if he dies unrecompensed, it will not be unregretted, or unvenerated. He must be of our council.”

Mr. Prevost had stood by in silence, with his eyes bent upon the ground. But Edith sprang forward and caught Sir William Johnson's hand as he ended the praises of her father, and bending her head with exquisite grace, pressed her lips upon it. Her brother seemed inclined to linger for a moment, but saying, “Come, Walter,” she glided out of the room, and the young lad, following, closed the door behind him.

CHAPTER II

"Who can he be?" said Walter Prevost, when they had reached the little sitting-room. "Sir William called him 'My Lord.' "

Edith smiled at her brother's curiosity. Oh, how much older women always are than men!

"Lords are small things here, Walter," she said.

"I do not think that lords are small things anywhere," answered her brother, who had not imbibed any of the republican spirit which was even then silently creeping over the American people. "Lords are made by kings for great deeds or great virtues."

"Then they are lords of their own making," answered Edith. "Kings only seal the patent nature has bestowed. That great red oak, Walter, was growing before the family of any man now living was ennobled by the hand of royalty."

"Pooh, nonsense!" answered her brother. "You are indulging in one of your day dreams. What has that oak to do with nobility?"

"I hardly know," replied his sister, "but yet something linked them together in my mind. It seemed as if the oak asked me, 'What is their antiquity to mine?' And yet the antiquity of their families is their greatest claim to our reverence."

"No! no!" cried Walter Prevost, eagerly. "Their antiquity is nothing, for we are all of as ancient a family as they are. But it is that they can show a line from generation to generation, displaying some high qualities, ennobled by some great acts. Granted that here or there a sluggard,

a coward, or a fool may have intervened, or that the acts which have won praise in other days may not be revered now. Yet I have often heard my father say that, in looking back through records of noble houses, we shall find a sum of deeds and qualities suited to and honored by succeeding ages, which, tried by the standard of the times of the men, shows that hereditary nobility is not merely an honor won by a worthy father for unworthy children, but a bond to great endeavors, signed by a noble ancestor on behalf of all his descendants. Edith, you are not saying what you think."

"Perhaps not," answered Edith, with a quiet smile; "but let us have some lights, Walter, for I am well nigh in darkness."

The lights were brought, and Walter and his sister sat down to muse over books—I can hardly say to read—till their father reappeared; for the evening prayer and the parting kiss had never been omitted in their solitude ere they lay down to rest. The conference in the hall, however, was long, and more than an hour elapsed before the three gentlemen entered the room. Then a few minutes were passed in quiet conversation, and then, all standing round the table, Mr. Prevost raised his voice, saying: "Protect us, O Father Almighty, in the hours of darkness and unconsciousness. Give us thy blessing of sleep to refresh our minds and bodies; and if it be thy will, let us wake again to serve and praise thee through another day more perfectly than in the days past, for Christ's sake."

The Lord's Prayer succeeded, and then they separated to their rest.

Before daylight in the morning Sir William Johnson was on foot and in the stable. Some three or four negro slaves—for there were slaves then on all parts of the continent—lay sleeping soundly in a small sort of barrack hard by; and as soon as one of them could be roused, his horse was saddled, and he rode away without stopping to eat or say farewell. He bent his course direct toward the banks of

the Mohawk, flowing at some twenty miles distance from the cottage of Mr. Prevost; and before he had been five minutes in the saddle was in the midst of the deep woods which surrounded the little well cultivated spot where the English wanderer had settled.

About a mile from the house a bright and beautiful stream crossed the road, flowing onward toward the greater river; but bridge there was none, and in the middle of the stream Sir William suffered his horse to stop and bend its head to drink. He gazed to the eastward, but all there was dark and gloomy under the thick overhanging branches. He turned his eyes to the westward, and they rested on a figure standing in the midst of the stream, with rod in hand, and his back turned toward him. He thought he saw another figure, too, amidst the trees upon the bank; but it was shadowy there, and the form seemed shadowy, too.

After gazing for a moment or two, he raised his voice and exclaimed: "Walter! Walter Prevost!"

The lad heard him, and laying his rod upon the bank, hastened along over the green turf to join him; but at the same moment the figure among the trees—if really figure it was—disappeared from sight.

"Thou art out early, Walter," said Sir William. "What do you at this hour?"

"I am catching trout for the stranger's breakfast," said the lad, with a gay laugh. "You should have had your share, had you but waited."

"Who was that speaking to you on the bank above?" asked the other, gravely.

"Merely an Indian girl, watching me fishing," replied Walter Prevost.

"I hope your talk was discreet," rejoined Sir William. "These are dangerous times, when trifles are of import, Walter."

"There was no indiscretion," replied the lad, with the color mounting slightly in his cheek. "She was noticing the feather flies with which I caught the fish, and blamed

me for using them. She said it was a shame to catch anything with false pretences."

"She is wise," answered the other, with a faint smile, "but yet that is hardly the wisdom of her people. An Indian maiden!" he added, thoughtfully. "Of what tribe is she? One of the Five Nations, I trust."

"Oh, yes; an Oneida," replied Walter. "One of the daughters of the Stone, the child of a sachem who often lodges at our house."

"Well, be she who she may," said Sir William, "be careful of your speech, especially regarding your father's guest. I say not, to conceal that there is a stranger with you, for that cannot be; but whatever you see or guess of his station, or his errand, keep it to yourself, and let not a woman be the sharer of your thoughts till you have tried her with many a trial."

"She would not betray them, I am sure," answered the lad, warmly, and then added, with some slight embarrassment, as if he felt that he had in a degree betrayed himself, "but she has nothing to reveal or to conceal. Our talk was all of the river and the fish. We met by accident, and she is gone."

"Perhaps you may meet by accident again," said the other, "and then be careful. But now to more serious things. Perchance your father may have to send you to Albany—perchance to my castle. You can find your way speedily to either. Is it not so?"

"Further than either," replied the lad, gayly.

"But you may have a heavy burden to carry," rejoined Sir William. "Do you think you can bear it—I mean the burden of a secret?"

"I will not drop it by the way," answered Walter, gravely.

"Not if the sachem's daughter offer to divide the load?" asked his companion.

"Doubt me not," said Walter.

"I do not," said Sir William. "I do not; but I would

have you warned. And now farewell. You are very young to meet maidens in the wood. Be careful. Farewell."

He rode on, and the boy tarried by the roadside and meditated.

In about two minutes he took his way up the stream again, still musing, toward the place where he had laid down his rod.

He sprang up the bank, and in amongst the maples; and some ten minutes after, the sun rising higher, poured its light through the stems upon a boy and girl seated at the foot of an old tree; he with his arms around her, and his hand resting on the soft, brown, velvety skin, and she with her head upon his bosom, and her warm lips within the reach of his.

Her skin was brown, I have said, yes, very brown, but still hardly browner than his own. Her eyes were dark and bright, of the true Indian hue, but larger and more open than is at all common in many of the tribes of Iroquois. Her lips, too, were rosy, and as pure of all tinge of brown as those of any child of Europe; and her fingers, also, were stained of Aurora's own hue. But her long, silky black hair would have spoken her race at once had not each tress terminated in a wavy curl. The lines of the form and of the face were all wonderfully lovely, too, and yet were hardly those which characterize so peculiarly the Indian nations. The nose was straighter, the cheek bones less prominent, the head more beautifully set upon the shoulders. The expression, too, as she rested there with her cheek leaning on his breast, was not that of the usual Indian countenance. It was softer, more tender, more impassioned; for though romance and poetry have done all they could to spiritualize the character of Indian love, I fear, from what I have seen and heard and known, it is rarely what it has been portrayed. Her face, however, was full of love and tenderness and emotion; and the picture of the two as they sat there told at once of a tale of love just spoken to a willing ear.

CHAPTER III

THE hour of breakfast had arrived when Walter Prevost returned with his river spoil; but the party at the house had not yet sat down to table. The guest who had arrived on the preceding night was standing at the door talking with Edith, while Mr. Prevost himself was within in conference with some of the slaves. Shaded by the little rustic porch, Edith was leaning against the door post in an attitude of exquisite grace, and the stranger, with his arms crossed upon his broad, manly chest, now raising his eyes to her face, now dropping them to the ground, seemed to watch with interest the effect his words produced as it was written on that beautiful countenance.

"I know not," said the stranger, speaking as the young man approached, "I know not how I should endure it myself for any length of time. The mere abstract beauty of nature would soon pall upon my taste, I fear, without occupation."

"But you would make occupation," answered Edith, earnestly; "you would find it. Occupation for the body is never wanting when you have to improve and cultivate and ornament; and occupation flows in from a thousand gushing sources in God's universe—even were one deprived of books and music."

"Aye, but companionships and social converse, and the interchange of thought with thought," said the stranger; "where could one find those?" and he raised his eyes to her face.

"Have I not my brother and my father?" she asked.

"True, you have," said the other; "but I should have no such resource."

He had seen a slight hesitation in her last reply. He thought that he had touched the point where the yoke of solitude galled the spirit. He was not the one to plant or to nourish discontent in anyone, and he turned at once to her brother, saying: "What, at the stream so early, my young friend? Have you had sport?"

"Not very great," answered Walter. "My fish are few, but they are large. Look here!"

"I call such sport excellent," said the stranger, looking into the basket. "I must have you take me with you some fair morning, for I am a great lover of the angle."

The lad hesitated, and turned somewhat redder in the cheek than he had been the moment before; but his sister saved him from reply, saying, in a musing tone: "I cannot imagine what delight men feel in what they call the sports of the field. To inflict death may be a necessity, but surely should not be an amusement."

"Man is a born hunter, Miss Prevost," replied the stranger, with a smile. "He must chase something. Oh, my dear young lady! few can tell the enjoyment, in the midst of busy, active, troublous life, of one calm day's angling by the side of a fair stream, with quiet beauty all around us, and no adversary but the speckled trout."

"And why should they be your foes?" asked Edith. "Why should you drag them from their cool, clear element to pant and die in the dry upper air?"

"Cause we want to eat 'em," said a voice from the door behind her; "they eats everything. Why shou'dn't we eat them? Darn this world; it is but a place for eating and being eaten. The bivers that I trap eat fish, and many a cunning trick the crafty critters use to catch 'em; the minks eat birds and birds' eggs. Men talk about beasts of prey. Why, everything is a beast of prey, eating the oxen and the sheep, and such like; and sometimes I have thought it hard to kill them, who never do harm to no one, and a great deal of good sometimes. But come, Master Walter, don't ye keep them fish in the sun. Give 'em to

black Rosie, the cook, and let us have some on 'em for breakfast afore they're all wilted up."

The man who spoke might have been five feet five or six in height, and was anything but corpulent. Yet he was in chest and shoulders as broad as a bull; and though the lower limbs were more lightly formed than the upper, yet the legs, as well as the arms, displayed strong, rounded muscles, swelling forth at every movement. His hair was as black as jet, without the slightest mixture of gray, though he could not be less than fifty-four or fifty-five years of age; and his face, which was handsome, with features somewhat eagle-like, was browned by exposure to a color nearly resembling that of mahogany. With his shaggy bearskin cap, well worn, and a frock of deerskin, with the hair on, descending to the knees, he looked more like a bison than anything human; and, half expecting to hear him roar, the stranger was surprised to trace tones soft and gentle, though somewhat nasal, to such a rude and rugged form.

While Walter carried his basket of fish to the kitchen, and Mr. Prevost's guest was gazing at the newcomer, in whom Edith seemed to recognize an acquaintance, the master of the house himself approached from behind the latter, saying as he came. "Let me make you acquainted with Mr. Brooks, Major Kielmansegge—Captain Jack Brooks."

"Pooh, pooh, Prevost!" exclaimed the other. "Call me by my right name. I was Captain Brooks long ago. I'm new christened, and called Woodchuck now. That's because I burrow, Major. Them Ingians are wonderful circumdiferous; but they have found that when they try tricks with me, I can burrow under them; and so they call me Woodchuck, 'cause it's a burrowing sort of a beast."

"I do not exactly understand you," said the gentleman who had been called Major Kielmansegge. "What is the exact meaning of circumdiferous?"

"It means just circumventing like," answered the Woodchuck. "First and foremost, there's many of the Ingians

—the Algonquin, for a sample—never tell a word of truth. No, no, not they. One of them told me so plainly one day. ‘Woodchuck,’ says he, ‘Ingian seldom tell truth. He know better than that. Truth too good a thing to be used every day; keep that for time of need.’ I believe at that precious moment he spoke the truth the first time for forty years.”

The announcement that breakfast was ready interrupted the explanation of Captain Brooks, but seemed to afford him great satisfaction, and at the meal, certainly, he ate more than all the rest of the party put together, consuming everything set before him with a voracity truly marvelous. He seemed to think some apology necessary, indeed, for his furious appetite. “You see, Major,” he said, as soon as he could bring himself to a pause sufficiently long to utter a sentence, “I eat well when I do eat; for sometimes I eat nothing for four or five days together. When I get to a lodge like this, I take in stores for my next voyage, as I can’t tell what port I shall touch at again.”

“Pray, do you anticipate a long cruise just now?” asked the stranger.

“No! no!” said the other, laughing; “but I always prepare against the worst. I am just going up the Mohawk for a step or two to make a trade with some of my friends of the Five Nations—the Iroquois, as the French folks call them. But I shall trot up afterward to Sandy Hill and Fort Lyman to see what is to be done there in the way of business. Fort Lyman I call it still, though it should be Fort Edward, for after the brush with Dieskau it has changed its name. Aye, that was a sharp affair, Major. You’d ha’ liked to bin there, I guess.”

“Were you there, Captain?” asked Mr. Prevost. “I did not know you had seen so much service.”

“There I was,” answered Woodchuck, with a laugh; “though, as to service, I did more than I was paid for, seeing I had no commission. I’ll tell you how it was, Prevost. Just in the beginning of September—the seventh or eighth,

I think—of the year afore last, that is, seventeen fifty-five, I was going up to the head of the lake to see if I could not get some peltry, for I had been unlucky down westward, and had made a bargain in Albany that I did not like to break. Just at the top of the hill, near where the King's road comes down to the ford, who should I stumble upon amongst the trees but old Hendrick, as they call him—why, I can't tell—the sachem of the Tortoise totem of the Mohawks. He was there with three young men at his feet; but we were always good friends, he and I, and over and above, I carried the calumet, so there was no danger. Well, we sat down, and he told me that the General, that is, Sir William as is now, had dug up the tomahawk, and was encamped near Fort Lyman, to give battle to You-non-de-yok; that is to say, in their jargon, the French governor. He told me, too, that he was on his way to join the General, but that he did not intend to fight, but only to witness the brave deeds of the Corlear men; that is to say, the English. He was a cunning old fox, old Hendrick, and I fancied from that he thought we should be defeated. But when I asked him, he said no; that it was all on account of a dream he had had, forbidding him to fight on the penalty of his scalp. So I told him I was minded to go with him and see the fun. Well, we mustered before the sun was quite down well nigh upon three hundred Mohawks, all beautifully painted and feathered; but they all told me they had not sung their war song, nor danced their war dance before they left their lodges, so I could see well enough that they had no intention to fight, and the tarnation devil wouldn't make 'em. However, we got to the camp, where they were all busy throwing up breastworks, and we heard that Dieskau was coming down from Hunter's in force. The next morning we heard that he had turned back again from Fort Lyman, and Johnson sent out Williams with seven or eight hundred men to get hold of his haunches. I tried hard to get old Hendrick to go along, for I stuck fast by my Ingians, knowing the brutes can be

serviceable when you trust them. But the sachem only grunted, and did not stir. In an hour and a half we heard a mighty large rattle of muskets, and the Ingians could not stand the sound quietly, but began looking at their rifle flints and fingering their tomahawks. However, they did not stir, and old Hendrick sat as grave and as brown as an old hemlock stump. Then we saw another party go out of camp to help the first; but in a very few minutes they came running back with Dieskau at their heels. In they tumbled over the breastworks head over heels—anyhow; and a pretty little considerable quantity of fright brought they with them. If Dieskau had charged straight on that minute, we should have all been smashed to everlasting flinders, and I don't doubt no more than that a bear's a critter that Hendrick and his painted devils would have had as many English scalps as French ones. But the old coon of a Garman halted up short some two hundred yards off, and Johnson did not give him much time to look about him, for he poured all the cannon shot he had got into him as hard as he could pelt. Well, the French Ingians, and there was a mighty sight of them, did not like that game of ball, and they squattered off to the right and left, some into the trees and some into the swamps; and I could stand it no longer, but up with my rifle and give them all I had to give; and old Hendrick, seeing how things were likely to go, took to the right end, too, but a little too fast, for the old devil came into him, and he must needs have scalps. So out he went with the rest, and just as he had got his forefinger in the hair of a young Frenchman, whiz came a bullet into his dirty red skin, and down he went like an old moose. Some twenty of his Ingians got shot, too; but, in the end, Dieskau had to run. Johnson was wounded, too; and them folks have since said that he had no right to the honor of the battle, but that it was Lyman, who took the command when he could fight no longer. But that's all trash! Dieskau had missed his chance, and all his irregulars were sent skimming by the first fire long before John-

son was hit. Lyman had nothing to do but hold what Johnson left him, and pursue the enemy. The first he did well enough, but the second he forgot to do, though he was a brave man and a good soldier, for all that."

This little narrative seemed to give matter for thought both to Mr. Prevost and his English guest, who, after a moment or two of somewhat gloomy consideration, asked the narrator whether the friendly Indians had on that occasion received any special offence to account for their unwillingness to give active assistance to their allies, or whether their indifference proceeded merely from a fickle or treacherous disposition.

"Somewhat of both," replied Captain Brooks; and after leaning his great, broad forehead on his hand for a moment or two in deep thought, he proceeded to give his views of the relations of the colonies with the Iroquois, in a manner and tone totally different from any he had used before. They were grave and almost stern; and his language had few, if any, of the coarse illustrations with which he ordinarily seasoned his conversation.

"They are a queer people, the Indians," he said, "and not so much savages as we are inclined to believe them. Sometimes I am ready to think that in one or two points they are more civilized than ourselves. They have not got our arts and sciences; and as they have got no books, one set of them cannot store up the knowledge they gain in their own time to be added to by every generation of them that comes after; and we all know that things which are sent down from mouth to mouth are soon lost or corrupted. But yet they are always thinking, and they have a calmness and a coolness in their thoughts that we white men very often want. They are quick enough in action when once they have determined upon a thing, and for perverseness they beat all the world; but they take a long time to consider before they do act, and it is really wonderful how quietly they do consider, and how steadily they stick in consideration to all their own old notions. We have not

treated them well, sir, and we never did. They have borne a great deal, and they will bear more still; but yet they feel and know it, and some day they may make us feel it, too. They have not the wit to take advantage at present of our divisions, and by joining together themselves make us feel all their power; for they hate each other worse than they hate us; but if the same spirit were to take the whole redmen which got hold of the Five Nations many a long year ago, and they were to band together against the whites as those Five Nations did against the other tribes, they'd give us a great deal of trouble, and though we might thrash them at first, we might teach them to thrash us in the end. As it is, however, you see there are two sets of Indians and two sets of white men in this country, each as different from the other as anything can be. The Indians don't say, as they ought: The country is ours, and we will fight against all the whites till we drive them out; but they say: The whites are wiser and stronger than we are, and we will help those of them who are wisest and strongest. I don't mean to say they have not got their likings and dislikings, and that they are not moved by kindness or by being talked to; for they are great haters and great likers. But still what I have said is at the bottom of all their friendships with the white men. The Dutchmen helped the Five Nations, and taught them to believe they were a strong people. So the Five Nations liked the Dutch, and made alliance with them. Then came the English, and proved stronger than the Dutch, and the Five Nations attached themselves to the English. They have stuck fast to us for a long time, and would not go from us without cause. If they could help to keep us great and powerful they would, and I don't think a little adversity would make them turn. But still to see us whipped and scalped would make them think a good deal; and they won't stay by a people long they don't respect. They have got their own notions, too, about faith and want of faith. If you are quite friendly with them—altogether—out and out, they'll

hold fast enough to their word with you ; but a very little turning, or shaking, or doubting, will make them think themselves free from all engagements, and then take care of your scalp-lock. If I am quite sure when I meet an Indian, that, as the good book says, 'My heart is right with his heart,' that I have never cheated him, or thought of cheating him ; that I have not doubted him, nor do I doubt him, I can lie down and sleep in his lodge as safe as if I were in the heart of Albany. But I should not sleep a wink if I knew there was the least little bit of insincerity in my own heart ; for they are as cute as serpents, and they are not a people to wait for explanations. Put your wit against theirs at the back of the forest, and you'll get the worst of it."

"But have we cheated or attempted to cheat these poor people?" asked the stranger.

"Why, the less we say about that the better, Major," replied Woodchuck, shaking his head. "They have had to bear a great deal ; and now, when the time comes that we look as if we were going to the wall, perhaps they may remember it."

"But I hope and trust we are not exactly going to the wall," said the other, with his color somewhat heightened. "There has been a great deal said in England about mismanagement of our affairs on this continent ; but I have always thought, being no very violent politician myself, that party spirit dictated criticisms which were probably unjust."

"There has been mismanagement enough, Major," replied Captain Brooks ; "hasn't there, Prevost?"

"I fear so, indeed," replied his host, with a sigh ; "but quite as much on the part of the colonial authorities as on that of the government at home."

"And whose fault is that?" asked the other, somewhat warmly. "Why, that of the government at home, too. Why do they appoint incompetent men? Why do they appoint ignorant men? Why do they exclude from

every office of honor, profit, trust, or emolument, the good men of the Provinces who know the situation and the wants and the habits of the Provinces, and put over us men who, if they were the best men in the world, would be inferior, from want of experience, to our own people, but who are nothing more than a set of presuming, ignorant, grasping blood-suckers, who are chosen because they are related to a minister or a minister's mistress, or perhaps his valet, and whose only object is to make as much out of us as they can, and then get back again. I do not say they are all so; but a great many of them are, and that is an insult and an injury to us."

He spoke evidently with a good deal of heat; but his feelings were those of a vast multitude of the American colonists, and those feelings were preparing the way for a great revolution.

"Come, come, Woodchuck!" exclaimed Walter Prevost, with a laugh, "you are growing warm; and when you are angry you bite. The Major wants to hear your notions of the state of the English power here, and not your censure of the King's government."

"God bless King George!" cried the other, warmly, "and send him all prosperity. There's not a more loyal man in the land than I am; but it vexes me all the more to see his ministers throwing away his people's hearts and losing his possessions into the bargain. But I'll tell you how it is, Major—at least how I think it is—and then you'll see. But I must go back a bit. Here are we, the English, in the middle of this North America; and we have got the French on both sides of us. Well, we have a right to the country all across the continent—and we must have it, for it is our only safety. But the French don't want us to be safe, and so they are trying to get behind us and push us into the sea. They have been trying it a long time, and we have taken no notice. They have pushed their posts from Canada right along by the Wabash and the Ohio from Lake Erie to the Mississippi, and they have built forts, and won

over Ingians, drawing a string round us, which they will tighten every day unless we act. And what have the ministers been doing all the time? Why, for a long time they did nothing at all. First, the French were suffered boldly to call the country their own, and to carry our traders and trappers and send them into Canada; and never a word said by our people. Then they built fort after fort, till troops can march, and goods can go, with little or no trouble, from Quebec to New Orleans; and all that this produced was a speech from Governor Hamilton and a message from Governor Dinwiddie. The last indeed sent to England and made representation; but all he got was an order to repel force by force if he could, but to be quite sure that he did so on the *undoubted* territories of King George. Undoubted! Why, the French made the doubt, and then took advantage of it. Dinwiddie, however, had some spirit, and with what help he could get, he began to build a fort himself in the best chosen spot of the whole country, just by the meeting of the Ohio and the Monongahela. But he had only one man to the French *ter*, and not a regular company amongst them. So the French marched with a thousand soldiers and plenty of cannon and stores, turned his people out, took possession of his half finished fort and completed it themselves. That was not likely to make the Ingians respect us. Well, then Colonel Washington, the Virginian, and the best man in the land, built Fort Necessity; but they left him without forces to defend it, and he was obliged to surrender to Villiers and a force big enough to eat him up. That did not raise us with our redskins, and a French force never moved without a whole herd of Ingians, supposed to be in friendship with us, but ready to scalp us when we were defeated. Then came Braddock's mad march upon Fort Du Quesne, where he and almost all who were with him were killed by a handful of Ingians amongst the bushes—fifteen hundred men dispersed, killed and scalped by not four hundred savages—all the artillery taken and baggage beyond count—think of

that! Then Shirley made a great parade of marching against Fort Niagara, but he turned back almost as soon as he set out; and had it not been for some good luck on the north side of Massachusetts Bay, and the victory of Johnson over Dieskau, you would not have had a tribe to hold fast to us. They were all wavering as fast as they could. I could see it as plain as possible from old Hendrick's talk; and the French Jesuits were in amongst them day and night to bring the Five Nations over. This was the year afore last. Well, what did they do last year? Nothing at all but lose Oswego. Lord Loudon and Abercrombie and Webb marched and countermarched and consulted and played the fool, while Montcalm was besieging Mercer, taking Oswego, breaking the terms he had expressly granted, and suffering his Ingians to scalp and torture his prisoners of war before his eyes. Well, this was just about the middle of August, but it was judged too late to do anything that year, and nothing was done. There was merry work in Albany, and people danced and sang; but the Ingians got a strange notion that the English lion was better at roaring than he was at biting. And now, Major, what have we done this year to make up for the blunders of the last five or six? Why, Lord Loudon stripped the whole of this province of its men and guns to go to Halifax and attack Louisburg. When he got to Halifax he exercised his men for a month, heard a false report that Louisburg was too strong and too well prepared to be taken, and sailed back to New York. In the meantime, Montcalm took Fort William Henry, on Lake George, and, as usual, let the garrison be butchered by the Ingians. So now the redskins see the English arms contemptible on every part of this continent, and the French complete masters of the lakes and the whole western country. The Five Nations see their Long House open to our enemies on three sides, and not a step taken to give them assistance or protection. We have abandoned them; can you expect them not to abandon us?"

The young officer, long before this painful question was asked, had leaned his elbow on the table and covered his eyes and part of his face with his hand. Walter and Edith both gazed at him earnestly, while their father bent his eyes gloomily down on the table—all three sympathizing with the feelings of a British officer while listening to such a detail. The expression they could not see, but the fine-cut ear appearing from beneath the curls of his hair glowed like fire before the speaker finished.

He did not answer, however, for more than a moment; but then raising his head, with a look of stern gravity he replied: "I cannot expect it. I cannot even understand how they have remained attached to us so long and so much."

"The influence of one man has done a great deal," replied Mr. Prevost. "Sir William Johnson is what is called the Indian agent, and whatever may be thought of his military ability, there can be no doubt that the Iroquois trust him, and love him more than they have ever trusted or loved a white man before. He is invariably just toward them; he always keeps his word with them; he never yields to importunity, or refuses to listen to reason; and he places that implicit confidence in them which enlists everything that is noble in the Indian character in his favor. Thus in his presence and in their dealings with him, they are quite a different people from what they are with others—all their fine qualities are brought into action, and all their wild passions are stilled."

"I should like to see them as they really are," said the young officer, eagerly; and then, turning to Woodchuck, he said: "You tell me you are going amongst them, my friend. Can you not take me with you?"

"Wait three days, and I will," replied the other. "I am first going up the Mohawk, as I told you, close by Sir William's castle and hall, as he calls the places. You'd see little there; but if you will promise to do just as I tell you, and take advice, I'll take you up to Sandy Hill and the

creek, where you'll see enough of them. That will be arter I come back on Friday about noon."

Mr. Prevost looked at the young officer, and he at his entertainer, and then the former asked: "When will you bring him back, Captain? He must be here again by next Tuesday night."

"That he shall be, with or without his scalp," answered Woodchuck, with a laugh. "You get him ready to go; for you know, Prevost, the forest is not the parade ground."

"I will lend him my Gakaah and Giseha and Gostoweh," cried Walter. "We will make him quite an Indian."

"No! no!" answered Woodchuck. "That won't do, Walter. The man who tries to please an Ingian by acting like an Ingian, makes nought of it. They know it's a cheat, and they don't like it. We have our ways, they have theirs; and let each keep his own, like honest men. So I think, and so the Ingians think. Putting on a lion's skin will never make a man a lion. Get him some good, tough leggings, and a coat that won't tear, a rifle, and an axe, and a wood-knife—a bottle of brandy is no bad thing. But don't forget a calumet and a bunch of tobacco, for both may be needful. So now good-bye t'ye all. I must trot."

Thus saying, he rose from the table, and without more ceremonious adieu, left the room.

CHAPTER IV

WHEN Brooks had left them, half an hour was spent in one of those pleasant after-breakfast dreams, when the mind seems to take a moment's hesitating pause before grappling with the active business of the day. But little was said; each gazed forth from window or from door; each thought perhaps of the other, and each drank in sweet sensations from the scene before the eyes.

Each thought of the other, I have said; and when such is the case, how infinite are the varieties into which thought moulds itself. Walter paused and pondered upon the stranger's state and objects—asked himself who he was, what could be his errand—how—why he came thither? Major Kielmansegge he knew him not to be. A chance word had shown him not only his rank and station, but shown also that there was a secret to be kept—a secret to which perhaps his imagination lent more importance than it deserved. He was an English peer, the young man knew, one of a rank with which in former years he had been accustomed to mingle, and for which, notwithstanding all that had passed, and lapse of time and varied circumstances, he retained an habitual veneration. But what could have led a British peer to that secluded spot? What could be the circumstances which, having led him thither, had suddenly changed his purpose of proceeding onward, and induced him to remain a guest in his father's cottage in a state of half-concealment? Could it be Lord Loudon, he asked himself, the commander-in-chief of the royal forces, whose conduct had been so severely censured in his own ears by the man just gone?

It was not by accident that Lord H—— and Edith Prevost met there. It was for the working out of their mutual destiny under the hand of God; for if there be a God, there is a special providence.

"This is very lovely, Miss Prevost," said the young soldier, when the long meditative lapse was drawing to a close, "but I should think the scene would become somewhat monotonous. Hemmed in by these woods, the country round, though beautiful in itself, must pall upon the taste."

"Oh, no!" cried Edith, eagerly. "It is full of variety. Each day affords something new, and every morning walk displays a thousand fresh beauties. Let us go and take a ramble, if you have nothing better to do; and I will show you there is no monotony. Come, Walter, take your rifle, and go with us. Father, this is not your hour. Can you never come before the sun has passed his height and see the shadows fall the other way?"

"Mine is the evening hour, my child," answered Mr. Prevost, somewhat sadly, "but go, Edith, and show our noble friend the scenes you so much delight in. He will need something to make his stay in this dull place somewhat less heavy."

The stranger made no complimentary reply, for his thoughts were busy with Edith; and he was at that moment comparing her frank, unconscious, undesigning offer to lead him through love-like woods and glades, with the wily hesitation of a court coquette.

"Perhaps you are not disposed to walk," said Edith, marking his reverie, and startling him from it.

"I shall be delighted," he said, eagerly, and truly, too. "You must forgive me for being somewhat absent, Miss Prevost. Your father knows I have much to think of, though indeed thought at present is vain; and you will confer a boon by banishing that idle but importunate companion."

"Oh, then, you shall not think at all when you are with me," said Edith, smiling, and away she ran to cover her

head with one of those black wimples very generally worn by the women of that day.

Beyond the cultivated ground, as you descended the gentle hill, lay the deep forest at the distance of some three hundred yards, and at its edge Edith paused and made her companion turn to see how beautiful the cottage looked upon its eminence, shaded by gorgeous maple trees in their gold and crimson garb of autumn, with a tall rock or two of gray and mossy stone rising up amidst them.

Lord H—— gazed at the house and saw that it was picturesque and beautiful—very different indeed from any other dwelling he had seen on the western side of the Atlantic; but there was absent thoughtfulness in his eyes, and Edith thought he did not admire it half enough.

“How strange are men’s prejudices and prepossessions,” said Lord H——, as they paused to gaze at a spot where a large extent of low woodland lay open to the eye below them. “We are incredulous of everything we have not seen, or to the conception of which we have not been led by very near approaches. Had anyone shown me, ere I reached these shores, a picture of an autumn scene in America, though it had been perfect as a portrait, hue for hue, or even inferior, in its striking coloring, to the reality, I should have laughed at it as a most extravagant exaggeration. Did not the first autumn you passed here make you think yourself in fairyland?”

“No; I was prepared for it,” replied Edith. “My father had described the autumn scenery to me often before we came.”

“Then was he ever in America before he came to settle?” asked her companion.

“Yes, once,” answered Edith. She spoke in a very grave tone, and then ceased suddenly.

But her brother took the subject up with a boy’s frankness, saying: “Did you never hear that my grandfather and my father’s sister died in Virginia? He was in com-

mand there, and my father came over just before my birth."

"It is a long story and a sad one, my lord," said Edith, with a sigh; "but look now as we mount the hill, and see how the scene changes. Every step upon the hillside gives us a different sort of tree, and the brush disappears from amidst the trunks. This grove is my favorite evening seat, where I can read and think under the broad, shady boughs, with nothing but beautiful sights around me."

"Truly, this is an enchanting scene. It wants, methinks, but the figure of an Indian in the foreground; and there comes one, I fancy, to fill up the picture—stay! stay! We shall want no rifles! It is but a woman coming through the trees."

"It is Otaitsa—it is the Blossom!" cried Edith and Walter in a breath, as they looked forward to a spot where across the yellow sunshine as it streamed through the trees, a female figure, clad in the gaily embroidered and brightly-colored *gakaah*, or petticoat, of the Indian women, was seen advancing with a rapid yet somewhat doubtful step. Edith, without pause or hesitation, sprang forward to meet the newcomer, and in a moment after the beautiful arms of the Indian girl who had sat with Walter in the morning were round the fair form of his sister, and her lips pressed on hers. There was a warmth and eagerness in their meeting unusual on the part of the red race; but while the young Oneida almost lay upon the bosom of her white friend, her beautiful dark eyes were turned toward her lover, as with a mixture of the bashful feelings of youth and the consciousness of having something to conceal, Walter, with a glowing cheek, lingered a step or two behind his sister.

"Art thou coming to our lodge, dear Blossom?" asked Edith; and then added, "Where is thy father?"

"We both come," answered the girl, in pure English, with no more of the Indian accent than served to give a peculiar softness to her tones. "I wait the Black Eagle

here since dawn of day. He has gone toward the morning with our father the White Heron; for we heard of Hurons by the side of Corlear, and some thought the hatchet would be unburied. So he journeyed to hear more from our friends by Horicon, and bade me stay and tell you and your brother Walter to forbear that road if I saw you turn your eyes toward the east wind. He and the White Heron will be by your father's council fire with the first star."

A good deal of this speech was unintelligible to Lord H——, who had now approached, and on whom Blossom's eyes were turned with a sort of timid and inquiring look. But Walter hastened to interpret, saying: "She means that her father and the missionary, Mr. Gore, have heard that there are hostile Indians on the shores of Lake Champlain, and have gone down toward Lake George to inquire; for Black Eagle—that is her father—is much our friend, and he always fancies that my father has chosen a dangerous situation here, just at the verge of the territory of the Five Nations, or their Long House, as they call it."

"Well, come to the lodge with us, dear Blossom," said Edith, while her brother was giving this explanation. "You know my father loves you well, and will be glad to have the Blossom with us. Here, too, is an English chief dwelling with us, who knows not what sweet blossoms grow on Indian trees."

But the girl shook her head, saying: "Nay; I must do the father's will. It was with much praying that he let me come hither with him; and he bade me stay here from the white rock to the stream. So must I obey."

"But it may be dangerous," replied Edith, "if there be Hurons so near; and it is sadly solitary, dear sister."

"Then stay with me for a while," said the girl, who would not affect to deny that her lonely watch was somewhat gloomy.

"I will stay with her and protect her," cried Walter, eagerly; "but, dearest Blossom, if we should see danger, you must fly to the lodge."

"Yes, stay with her, Walter—oh, yes, stay with her," said the unconscious Edith; and so it was settled, for Otaita made no opposition, though with a cheek in which something glowed through the brown, and with a lip that curled gently with a meaning smile, she asked: "Perhaps my brother Walter would be elsewhere? He may find a long watch wearisome on the hill and in the wood."

"Let us stay a while ourselves," said Lord H——, seating himself on the grass and gazing forth with a look of interest over the prospect. "Methinks this is a place where one may well dream away an hour without the busiest mind reproaching itself for inactivity."

For two hours the four sat there on the hillside, beneath the tall, shady trees, with the wind breathing softly upon them, the lake glittering before their eyes, the murmur of the waterfall sending music through the air. But to the young Englishman these were but accessories. The fair face of Edith was before his eyes, the melody of her voice in his ears.

At length, however, they rose to go, promising to send one of the slaves from the house with food for Walter and Otaita at the hour of noon; and Lord H—— and his fair companion took their way back toward the house. The distance was not very far, but they were somewhat long upon the way. They walked slowly back, and by a different path from that by which they went; and often they stopped to admire some pleasant scene; and often Lord H—— had to assist his fair companion over some rock, and her soft hand rested in his. He gathered for her flowers—the fringed gentian and other late blossoms, and they paused to examine them closely and comment on their loveliness; and once he made her sit down beside him on a bank and tell him the names of all the different trees; and from trees his conversation went on into strange, dreamy, indefinite talk of human beings and human hearts. Thus noon was not far distant when they reached the house, and both Edith and her companion were very thoughtful.

Edith was meditative through the rest of the day. Was it of herself she thought? Was it of him who had been her companion through the greater part of the morning?

There had been no word spoken; there had been no sign given; there had been no intimation to make the seal tremble on the fountain, but the master of its destiny was near. She had had a pleasant ramble with one such as she seldom saw—and that was all.

There had been something that day in the manner of her brother Walter, a hesitation, and yet an eagerness, a timidity unnatural, with a warmth that spoke of passion, which had not escaped her eye. In the sweet Indian girl, too, she had seen signs not equivocal: the fluttering blush, the look full of soul and feeling; the glance suddenly raised to the boy's face and suddenly withdrawn; the eyes full of liquid light, now beaming brightly under sudden emotion, now shaded beneath the long fringe like the moon beneath a passing cloud.

For the first time it seemed to her that a dark, impenetrable curtain was falling between herself and all the ancient things of history; that all indeed was to be new, and strange, and different; and yet she loved Otaita well, and had in the last two years seen many a trait which had won esteem as well as love. The old Black Eagle, as her father was called, had ever been a fast and faithful ally of the English; but to Mr. Prevost he had attached himself in a particular manner. An accidental journey on the part of the old sachem had first brought them acquainted, and from that day forward the distance of the Oneida settlement was no impediment to their meeting. Whenever the Black Eagle left his lodge he was sure, in his own figurative language, to wing his flight sooner or later toward the nest of his white brother; and in despite of Indian habits, he almost invariably brought his daughter with him. When any distance or perilous enterprise was on hand, Otaita was left at the lodge of the English family, and many a week had she passed there at a time, loved by and loving

all its inmates. It was not there, however, that she had acquired her perfect knowledge of the English language, or the other characteristics which distinguished her from the ordinary Indian women. When she first appeared there she spoke the language of the settlers as perfectly as they did, and it was soon discovered that from infancy she had been under the care and instruction of one of the English missionaries—at that time, alas! few—who had sacrificed all that civilized life could bestow for the purpose of bringing the Indian savages into the fold of Christ.

Mr. Prevost judged it quite right that Walter should stay with Otaita, and he even sent out the old slave Agrippa, who somehow was famous as a marksman, with a rifle on his shoulder, to act as a sort of scout upon the hillside, and watch anything bearing a hostile aspect.

After dinner, too, he walked out himself, and sat for an hour with his son and the Indian girl, speaking words of affection to her that sunk deep into her heart, and more than once brought drops into her bright eyes. No father's tenderness could exceed that he showed her, and Otaita felt as if he were almost welcoming her as a daughter.

Evening had not lost its light when a shout from Walter's voice announced that he was drawing nigh the house, and in a moment after he was coming across the cleared land with his bright young companion and two other persons. One was a tall redman, upward of six feet in height, dressed completely in the Indian garb, but without paint. He could not have been less than sixty years of age, but his strong muscles seemed to have set at defiance the bending power of time. He was as upright as a pine, and he bore his heavy rifle in his right hand as lightly as if it had been a reed. In his left he carried a long pipe, showing that his errand was one of peace, though in his belt were a tomahawk and a scalping knife; and he wore the sort of feather crown, or *gostoweh*, distinguishing the chief. The other man might be of the same age, or a little older. He, too, seemed active and strong for his years, but he wanted

the erect and powerful bearing of the other, and his gait and carriage, as much as his features and complexion, distinguished him from the Indian. His dress was a strange mixture of ordinary European costume and that of the half-savage rangers of the forest. He wore a black coat, or one that had once been black, but the rest of his garments were composed of skins, some tanned into red leather, after the Indian fashion, some with the hair still on and turned outward. He bore no arms whatever, unless a very long, sharp-pointed knife could be considered a weapon, though in his hands it only served the unusual service of dividing his food or carving willow whistles for the children of the sachem's tribe.

Running with a light foot by the side of the chief, as he strode along, came Otaitsa; but all the others followed the Indian fashion, coming after him in single file, while old Agrippa, with his rifle on his arm, brought up the rear, appearing from the wood somewhat behind the rest.

"It is seldom I have so many parties of guests in two short days," said Mr. Prevost, moving toward the door. "Generally I have either a whole tribe at once, or none at all. But this is one of my best friends, my lord, and I must go to welcome him."

"He is a noble-looking man," said the young officer, following. "This is the Black Eagle, I suppose, whom the pretty maiden talked of?"

Mr. Prevost made no reply, for by this time the chief's long strides had brought him almost to the door, and his hand was already extended to grasp that of his white friend.

"Welcome, Black Eagle!" said Mr. Prevost.

"Thou art my brother," said the chief in English, but of a much less pure character than that of his daughter.

"What news from Corlear?" asked Mr. Prevost.

But the Indian answered not; and the man who followed him replied in so peculiar a style that we must give his

words, although they imported very little as far as the events to be related are concerned.

"All is still on the banks of Champlain Lake," he said; "but Huron tracks are still upon the shore. The friendly Mohawks watched them come and go, and tell us that the Frenchman, too, was there, painted and feathered like the Indian chiefs; but finding England stronger than they thought, upon the side of Horicon, they sailed back to Fort Carrillon on Monday last."

For an instant Lord H—— was completely puzzled to discover what it was that gave such peculiarity to the missionary's language; for the words and accent were those of an ordinary Englishman of no very superior education; and it was not until Mr. Gore had uttered one or two sentences more that he perceived that what he said often arranged itself into a sort of blank verse, not very poetical, not very musical, even, but scanable easily enough.

In the meanwhile the Black Eagle and his host had entered the house and proceeded straight to the great eating-hall, where the whole party seated themselves in silence, Otaita taking her place close to the side of Edith, while Walter stationed himself where he could watch the bright girl's eyes without being remarked himself.

For a moment or two no one spoke, in deference to the Indian habits, and then Mr. Prevost broke silence, saying: "Well, Black Eagle, how fares it with my brother?"

"As with the tamarac in the autumn," answered the warrior, "the cold wind sighs through the branches and the fine leaves wither and fall, but the branch stands firm, as yet, and decay has not reached the heart."

"This is a chief from the land of my white fathers," said Mr. Prevost, waving his hand gracefully toward Lord H——. "He has but lately crossed the great water."

"He is welcome to what was once the redman's land," said Black Eagle, and bending his eyes upon the ground, but without any sign of emotion at the thoughts which seemed to be beneath his words, he lapsed into silence for a

minute or two. Then raising his head again, he asked: "Is he a great chief? Is he a warrior, or a man of council, or a medicine man?"

"He is a great chief and a warrior," answered Mr. Prevost. "He is, moreover, skilled in council, and his words are clear as the waters of Horicon."

"He is welcome," repeated the chief. "He is our brother. He shall be called the Cataract, because he shall be powerful, and many shall rejoice at the sound of a calm voice. But, my brother——"

"Speak on," said Mr. Prevost, seeing that he paused. "They are friendly ears that listen."

"Thou art too near the Catarqui, thou art too near to Corlear," said the warrior, meaning the river St. Lawrence and Lake Champlain. "There is danger for our brother, and the wings of the Black Eagle droop when he is in his solitary place afar midst the children of the Stone, to think that thou art not farther within the walls of the Long House."

"What does he mean by the walls of the Long House?" asked Lord H—— in a whisper, addressing Edith.

"Merely the territory of the Five Nations, or Iroquois, as the French call them," answered his fair companion.

"I fear not, brother," replied Mr. Prevost. "The fire and the iron have not met to make the tomahawk which shall reach my head."

"But for the maiden's sake," said Black Eagle. "Is she not unto us as a daughter? Is she not the sister of Otaitsa? I pray thee, White Pine Tree, let her go with the Eagle and the Blossom into the land of the children of the Stone but for a few moons, till thy people have triumphed over their enemies, and till the Five Nations have hewed down the trees of the Huron and the Algonquin; till the war hatchet is buried and the pipe of peace is smoked."

"'Twere better, truly, my good friend Prevost," said Mr. Gore. "We have seen sights to-day would make the blood of the most bold and hardy man on earth turn cold and icy,

to behold, and know he had a daughter near such scenes of death."

"What were they, my good friend?" asked Mr. Prevost. "I have heard of nothing very new or near. The last was the capture of Fort William Henry, some six weeks since; but as yet we have not heard the whole particulars, and surely, if we are far enough away for the tidings not to reach us in six weeks, it is not likely that hostile armies would approach us very soon."

"Thou art deceived, my brother," answered Black Eagle. "One short day's journey lies betwixt thee and the battle-field. This morning we crossed when the sun wanted half an hour of noon, and we are here before he has gone down behind the forest. What we saw chilled the blood of my brother here, for he has not seen such things before. The children of Stone slay not women and children when the battle is over."

"Speak! speak! my good friend, Mr. Gore!" said the master of the house. "You know our habits better, and can tell us more of what has happened. Things which are common to his eye must be strange to yours."

"We passed the ground between the one fort and the other," answered the missionary. "The distance is but seven or eight miles; and in that short space lay well nigh a thousand human bodies, slain by every dark and terrible means of death. There were young and old: the gray-headed officer, the blooming youth, fresh from his mother's side; women and boys and girls, and little infants snatched from the mother's breast, to die by the hatchet or the war club. We heard the tiger Montcalm, in violation of his given word, in defiance of humanity, Christianity, and the spirit of a gentleman, stood by and saw his own convention broken, and gallant enemies massacred by his savage allies. But what the chief says is very true, my friend. You are far too near this scene; and although, perhaps, no regular army could reach this place ere you received timely warning, yet the Indian forerunners may be upon you at

any moment, your house in flames, and you and your children massacred ere anyone could come to give you aid. The troops of our country are far away, and no force is between you and Horicon but a small body of our Mohawk brethren, who are not as well pleased with England as they have been."

Mr. Prevost turned his eyes toward Lord H——, and the young Englishman replied to Mr. Gore at once, saying, with a quiet inclination of the head: "On one point you are mistaken, sir. Lord Loudon has returned, and there is now a strong force at Albany. I passed through that city lately, and I think that by the facts which must have come to his knowledge, General Montcalm will be deterred from pushing his brutal incursions further this year, at least. Before another shines upon him he may receive some punishment for his faithless cruelty."

"If not here, hereafter," said the missionary. "There is justice in heaven, sir, and often it visits the evil-doer upon earth. That man's end cannot be happy. But I fear you will not give us aid in persuading our friend here to abandon for a time his very dangerous position."

"I know too little of Mr. Prevost's affairs," replied Lord H——, "to advise either for or against. I know still less of the state of the country between this and the French line. Perhaps in a day or two I may know more; and then, as a military man myself, I can better tell him what are the real dangers of his situation. At all events, I should like to think over the matter till to-morrow morning before I offer an opinion. From what was said just now, I infer that the Hurons and the French having gone back, there can be no immediate peril."

Mr. Gore shook his head, and the Indian chief remained in profound and somewhat dull silence, seeming not very well pleased with the result of the discussion. A few minutes after the evening meal was brought in, and to it, at least, the Black Eagle did ample justice, eating like a European, with a knife and fork, and displaying no trace

of the savage in his demeanor at the table. He remained profoundly silent, however, till the party rose, and then, taking Mr. Prevost's hand, he said: "Take counsel of thine own heart, my brother. Think of the flower that grows up by thy side; ask if thou wouldst have it trodden down by the redman's moccasin, and listen not to the Cataract, for it is cold."

Thus saying, he unrolled one of the large skins which lay at the side of the room, and stretched himself upon it to take repose.

Edith took Otaita by the hand, saying, "Come, Blossom, you shall be my companion as before;" and Walter retiring the moment after, left Lord H—— and his host to consult together with Mr. Gore.

CHAPTER V

ONE hour after the sun had risen again, three travelers took their way onward from the house of Mr. Prevost, along a path which led to the northeast.

Two other persons watched them from the door of the house, and two negro men and a negro woman gazed after them from the corner of the building which joined on to a low fence encircling the stable and poultry yard, and running on round the well cultivated kitchen garden.

The negro woman shook her head, and looked sorrowful, and sighed, but said nothing. The two men talked freely of the imprudence of "Master" in suffering his son to go upon such an expedition.

Mr. Prevost and his daughter gazed in silence till the receding figures were hidden by the trees. Then the master of the house led Edith back, saying: "God will protect him, my child. A parent was not given to crush the energies of youth, but to direct them."

In the meanwhile, Lord H—— and his guide, Captain Brooks, according to his English name, or Woodchuck, in the Indian parlance, followed by Walter Prevost, made their way rapidly and easily through the wood. The two former were dressed in the somewhat anomalous attire which I have described in first introducing the worthy Captain to the reader; but Walter was in the ordinary costume of the people of the province of that day, except inasmuch as he had his rifle in his hand and a large leathern wallet slung over his left shoulder. Each of his companions, too, had a rifle hung across the back by a broad leathern band; and each was furnished with a hatchet at his girdle, and a long pipe, with a curiously carved stem, in his hand.

Although they were not pursuing any of the public provincial roads, and were consequently obliged to walk singly, the one following the other, yet Woodchuck, who led the way, had no difficulty in finding it, or in proceeding steadily.

We are told by an old writer of those days, who, unlike many modern writers, witnessed all he described with his own eyes, that the Indian trails, or footpaths, were innumerable over that large tract of country which the Five Nations called their "Long House," crossing and recrossing each other in every different direction, sometimes almost lost where the ground was hard and dry, sometimes indenting by the repeated pressure of many feet, the natural soil to the depth of thirty-six or forty inches.

It was along one of these that the travelers were passing, and although a stump here and there, or a young tree springing up in the midst of a trail, offered an occasional impediment, it was rarely of such a nature as to retard the travelers in their course, or materially add to their fatigue.

With the calm assurance and unhesitating rapidity of a practised woodsman, Brooks led his two companions forward without doubt as to his course. No great light had he, it is true, for though the sun was actually above the horizon, and now and then his slanting rays found their way through some more open space, and gilded the pathway, in general the thick trees and underwood formed a shade which at that early hour the light could hardly penetrate, and the sober morning was to these travelers still dressed almost in the dark hues of night.

"Set your steps in mine," said Woodchuck, speaking in a whisper over his shoulder to Lord H——, "then we shall be real Indians. Don't you know that when they go out on the war path, as they call it, each man puts down his foot just where his leader put down his before? So, come dog, come cat, no one can tell how many went to Jack Pilberry's barn."

"But do you think there is any real danger?" asked Lord H——.

"There is always danger in a dark wood and a dark eye," answered Woodchuck, with a laugh, "but no more danger here than in Prevost's cottage, from either the one or the other, for you or for Walter. As for me, I am safe anywhere."

"But you are taking strange precautions where there is no danger," replied Lord H——, who could not banish all doubts of his wild companion. "You speak in whispers, and advise us to follow all the cunning devices of the Indians in a wood which we passed through fearlessly yesterday."

"I am just as fearless now as you were then, if you passed through this wood," answered Brooks, in a graver tone, "but you are not a woodsman, or you'd understand better. What I mean, sir, is that we are so often in danger, we think it best to act as if we were always in it; and never knowing how near it may be, to make as sure as we can that we keep it at a distance. You cannot tell there is not an Indian in every bush you pass, and yet you'd chatter as loud as if you were in any lady's drawing-room. But I, though I know there is ne'er a one, don't speak louder than a grasshopper's hind legs, for fear I would get into the habit of talking loud in the forest."

"There is some truth, my friend, I believe in what you say," replied Lord H——, "but I hear a sound growing louder and louder as we advance. It is the cataract, I suppose."

"Yes, just the waterfall," answered the other, in an indifferant tone. "Down half a mile below it Master Walter will find the boat that will take him to Albany. Then you and I can snake up by the side of the river till we have gone as far as we have a mind to. I shouldn't wonder if we got a shot at somewhat on four, a moose or a painter, or a looksevere, or something of that kind. Pity we haven't got a canoe or a batteau, or something to put our game in."

"In heaven's name, what do you call a looksevere?" asked Lord H——.

"Why, the French folks call it a loup-cervier," answered Brooks. "I guess you never saw one. But he is not as pleasant as a pretty maid in a by-place, is he, Walter? He puts himself up into a tree, and there he watches, looking full asleep; but with the devil that is in him moving every joint of his tail the moment he hears anything come trotting along; and when it is just under him down he drops upon it plump, like a rifle shot into a pumpkin."

The conversation then fell off into a word or two spoken now and then, and the voice of the waters grew loud and more loud until Lord H—— could hardly hear his own footfalls. The more practised ear of Brooks, however, caught every sound, and at length he exclaimed: "What's alive? Why are you cocking your rifle, Walter?"

"Hush!" said the lad, "there is something stealing on there, just behind the bushes. It is an Indian, I think, going on all fours. Look quietly out there."

"More likely a bear," replied Woodchuck, in the same low tone which the other had used. "I see—I see. It's not a bear either, but it's not an Indian. It's gone—no, there it is again. Hold hard—let him climb. It's a painter. Here, Walter, come up in front—you shall have him. The cur smells fresh meat. He'll climb in an instant. There he goes—no, the critter's on again. We shall lose him if we don't mind. Quick, Walter! Spread out there to the right. I will take the left, and we shall drive him to the water, where he must climb. You, Major, keep right on ahead. Mind, take the middle trail all along, and look up at the branches, or you may have him on your head. There, he's heading south. Quick, Walter, quick!"

Lord H—— had as yet seen nothing of the object discovered by the eyes of his two companions, but he had sufficient of the sportsman in his nature to enter into all their eagerness, and unslinging his rifle he followed the path or trail along which they had been proceeding, while Walter

Prevost darted away into the tangled bushes on his right, and Woodchuck stole more quietly in amongst the trees on his left. He could hear the branches rustle, and for nearly a quarter of a mile could trace their course on either side of him by the various little signs—of now a waving branch, now a slight sound. Once, and only once, he thought he saw the panther cross the trail, but it was at a spot peculiarly dark, and he did not feel at all sure that fancy had not deceived him.

The roar of the cataract in the meantime increased each moment, and it was evident to the young nobleman that he and his companions, on their different courses, were approaching more and more closely to some large stream, toward which it was the plan of good Captain Brooks to force the object of their pursuit. At length, too, the light became stronger, and he heard the report of a rifle, then a fierce, snarling sound, and then a shout from Walter Prevost.

Knowing how dangerous the wounded panther is, the young officer, without hesitation, darted away into the brush to aid Edith's brother, for by this time it was in that light that he generally thought of him; and the lad soon heard his approach, and guided him by his voice, calling, "Here! here!" There was no alarm or agitation in his tones—they were rather those of triumph; and a moment after, as he caught sight of his friend coming forward, he added: "He's a splendid beast. I must have the skin off him."

Lord H—— drew nigh, somewhat relaxing his speed when he found there was no danger, and in another minute he was by the side of the lad, who was quietly recharging his rifle, while at some six or seven yards distance lay a large panther of the American species, mortally wounded, and quite powerless of evil, but not yet quite dead.

"Keep away from him—keep away!" cried Walter, as the young nobleman approached. "They sometimes tear on terribly, even at the last gasp."

"Why, he is nearly as big as a tiger," said Lord H——.

"He is a splendid fellow," answered Walter, joyfully. "One might live a hundred years in England without finding such game."

Lord H—— smiled, and remained for a moment or two, till the young man's rifle was reloaded, gazing at the beast in silence.

Suddenly, however, they both heard the sound of another rifle on the left, and Walter exclaimed, "Woodchuck has got one, too!" But the report was followed by a yell very different from the snarl or growl of a wounded beast. "That's no panther's cry!" exclaimed Walter Prevost, his cheek turning somewhat pale. "What can have happened?"

"It sounded like a human voice," said Lord H——, listening, "like that of someone in sudden agony. I trust our friend the Woodchuck has not shot himself by some accident."

"It was not a white man's voice," said Walter, bending his ear in the direction from which had come the sounds. But all was still, and the young man raised his voice and shouted to his companion.

No answer was returned, however, and Lord H——, exclaiming, "We had better seek him at once—he may need help!" darted away toward the spot whence his ear told him the shot had come.

"A little more to the right, my lord, a little more to the right!" said Walter. "You will hit on a trail in a minute." And raising his voice again, he shouted: "Woodchuck! Woodchuck!" with evident alarm and distress.

He was right in the supposition that they should soon find some path. They quickly struck an Indian trail crossing that on which they had been previously proceeding, and leading in the direction in which they wished to go. Both then hurried on with greater rapidity, Walter rather running than walking, and Lord H—— following, with his rifle cocked in his hand. They had not far to go, however, for the trail soon opened upon a small piece of grassy

savanna, lying close upon the river's edge, and in the midst of it they beheld a sight which was terrible enough in itself, but which afforded less apprehension and grief to the mind of Lord H—— than to that of Walter Prevost, who was better acquainted with the Indian habits and character.

About ten yards from the mouth of the path appeared the powerful form of Captain Brooks, with his folded arms leaning on the muzzle of his discharged rifle. He was as motionless as a statue, his brow contracted, his brown cheek very pale, and his eyes bent forward upon an object lying upon the grass before him. It was the form of a dead Indian, weltering in his blood. The dead man's head was bare of all covering except the scalp-lock. He was painted with the war colors, and in his hand, as he lay, he grasped the tomahawk, as if it had been raised in the act to strike the moment before he fell. To the eyes of Lord H—— his tribe or nation was an undiscovered secret, but certain small signs and marks in his garb, and even in his features, showed Walter Prevost at once that he was not only one of the Five Nations, but an Oneida. The full and terrible importance of the fact will be seen by what followed.

For some two minutes the three living men stood silent in the presence of the dead, and Walter exclaimed, in a tone of deep grief: "Alas! Woodchuck, what have you done?"

"Saved my scalp," answered Brooks, sternly, and fell into silence again.

There was another long silence, and then Lord H——, mistaking in some degree the causes of the man's strong emotion, laid his hand upon the hunter's arm, saying: "Come away, my friend. Why should you linger here?"

"It's no use," answered Woodchuck, gloomily. "He had a woman with him, and it will soon be known all through the tribe."

"But for your own safety," said Walter, "you had better fly. It is very sad indeed—what could make him attack you?"

"An old grudge, Master Walter," answered Brooks, seating himself deliberately on the ground and laying his rifle across his knee. "I knew the critter well, the Striped Snake they called him, and a snake he was. He tried to cheat and to rob me, and I made it plain to the whole tribe. Some laughed, and thought it fair, but old Black Eagle scorned and rebuked him, and he has hated me ever since. He has been long watching for this, and now he has got it."

"Well, well," said Walter, "what's done cannot be undone, and you had better get away as fast as may be, for Black Eagle told me he had left three scouts behind to bring tidings in case of danger, and we cannot tell how near the others may be."

"This was one of them," answered Brooks, still keeping his seat and gazing at the Indian. "But what is safety to me, Walter? I can no more roam the forests. I can no more pursue my way of life. I must go into dull and smoky cities and plod amongst thieving, cheating crowds of white men. The rifle and the hatchet must be laid aside forever; the forest grass must know my foot no more. Flowers and green leaves and rushing streams and the broad lake and the mountain top are lost and gone, the watch under the deep boughs and by the silent waters. Close pressed amidst the toiling herd, I shall become sordid and low and filthy as they are; my free nature lost and gyves upon my spirit. All life's blessings are gone from me; why should I care for life?"

There was something uncommonly plaintive, mournful and earnest in his tones, and Lord H—— could not help feeling for him, although he did not comprehend fully the occasion of his grief. "But, my good friend," he said, "I cannot perceive how your having slain this Indian in your own defence can bring such a train of miseries upon you. You would not have killed him if he had not attacked you."

"Alas for me! alas for me!" was all the answer the poor man made.

"You do not know their habits, sir," said Walter, in a low voice. "They must have blood for blood. If he stays here, if he ever returns, go where he will in the Indian territory, they will track him, they will follow him day and night. He will be amongst them like one of the wild beasts whom we chase so eagerly—pursued from place to place with the hatchet always hanging over his head. There is no safety for him but far away in the provinces beyond those towns that Indians ever visit. So persuade him to come away and leave the body. He can go down with me to Albany, and thence make his way to New York or Philadelphia."

For some minutes Brooks remained deaf to all arguments. His whole mind and thoughts seemed occupied with the terrible conviction that the wild scenes and the free life which he enjoyed so intensely were lost forever.

Suddenly, however, when Lord H—— was just about to give up in despair the task of persuading him, he started up as if some new thought struck him, and gazing first at Walter and then at the young officer, he exclaimed: "But I am keeping you here, and you, too, may be murdered! The death spot is upon me, and it will spread to all around. I am ready to go. I will bear my fate as well as I can, but it is very, very hard. Come! Let us begone quick—stay! I will charge my rifle first. Who knows how soon we may need it for such bloody work again!"

All his energy seemed to have returned in a moment, and it deserted him not again. He charged his rifle with wonderful rapidity, tossed it under his arm, and took a step as if to go. Then for a moment he paused, and advancing close to the dead Indian gazed at him sternly. "Oh, my enemy," he cried, "thou saidst thou wouldst have revenge, and thou hast had it—far more bitter than if thy hatchet had entered into my skull, and I were lying in thy place."

Turning round as soon as he had spoken, he led the way back along the trail, murmuring rather to himself than to his companions: "The instinct of self-preservation is very

strong. Better for me had I let him slay me. I know not how I was fool enough to fire. Come, Walter, we must get round the falls, where we shall find some batteaux that will carry us down."

He walked along for some five minutes in silence, and suddenly looked round to Lord H——, exclaiming: "But what's to become of him? How is he to find his way back again? Come! I will go back with him—it matters not if they do catch me and scalp me. I do not like to be dogged and tracked and followed and taken unawares. I can but die at last. I will go back with him as soon as you are in the boat, Walter."

"No, no, Woodchuck! That will not do!" replied the lad. "You forget that if they found you with him they would kill him, too. I will tell you how we will manage it. Let him come down with us to the point, then there is a straight road up to the house, and we can get one of the batteaux men to go up with him and show him the way, unless he likes to go on with me to Albany."

"I cannot do that," replied Lord H——, "for I promised to be back at your father's house by to-morrow night, and matters of much importance may have to be decided. But I can easily land at the point, as you say—whatever point you may mean—and find my way back. As for myself, I have no fears. There seem to be but a few scattered parties of Indians of different tribes roaming about, and I trust that anything like general hostility is at an end for this year at least."

"In Indian warfare the danger is the greatest, I have heard, when it seems the least," replied Walter Prevost; "but from the point to the house, some fourteen or sixteen miles, the road is perfectly safe, for it is the only one on which large numbers of persons are passing to and from Albany."

"It will be safe enough," said Woodchuck; "that way is always quiet; and besides, a wise man and a powerful one could travel at any time from one end of the Long House

to the other without risk—unless there were special cause. It is bad shooting we have had to-day, Walter, but still I should have liked to have the skin of that panther. He seemed to me an unextinguishable fine crittur."

"He was a fine creature, and that I know, for I shot him, Woodchuck," said Walter Prevost, with some pride in the achievement. "I wanted to send the skin to Otaitsa—but it cannot be helped."

"Let us go and get it now!" cried Woodchuck, with the ruling passion strong in death. "'Tis but a step back. Darn those Ingians! Why should I care?"

But both his companions urged him forward, and they continued their way through woods skirting the river for somewhat more than two miles, first rising gently to a spot where the roar of the waters was heard distinctly, and then, after descending, rising again to a rocky point midway between the highest ground and the water level, where a small congregation of huts had been gathered together, principally inhabited by boatmen, and surrounded by a stout palisade.

The scene at the hamlet itself had nothing very remarkable in it. Here were women sitting at the door, knitting and sewing, men lounging about or mending nets or making lines, children playing in the dirt, as usual, both inside and outside of the palisade. The traces of more than one nation could be discovered in the features as well as in the tongues of the inhabitants, and it was not difficult to perceive that here had been congregated, by the force of circumstances into which it is not necessary to inquire, sundry fragments of Dutch, English, Indian, and even French—races all bound together by a community of object and pursuit.

The approach of the three strangers did not in any degree startle the good people from their idleness or their occupations. The carrying trade was then a very good one, especially in remote places where traveling was difficult, and these people could always make a very tolerable livelihood

without any very great or continuous exertion. The result of such a state of things is always very detrimental to activity of mind or body, and the boatmen, though they sauntered up round Lord H—— and his companions, divining that some profitable piece of work was before them, showed amazing indifference as to whether they would undertake it or not. But that which astonished Lord H—— the most was to see the deliberate coolness with which Woodchuck set about making his bargain for the conveyance of himself and Walter to Albany. He sat down upon a large stone within the enclosure, took a knife from his pocket and a piece of wood from the ground, and began cutting the latter with the former with as tranquil and careless an air as if there were no heavy thought upon his mind—no dark memory behind him—no terrible fate dogging him at the heels. But Woodchuck and Walter were both well known to the boatmen, and though they might probably have attempted to impose upon the inexperience of the lad, they knew they had met their match in the shrewdness of his companion, and were not aware that any circumstance rendered speed more valuable to him than money. The bargaining, then, was soon concluded, but Captain Brooks was not contented till he had bargained also for the services of two men in guiding Lord H—— back to the house of Mr. Prevost. This was undertaken for a dollar apiece, however, and then the whole party proceeded to the bank of the river, where a boat was soon unmoored, and Walter and his companion set forth upon their journey, not, however, till Lord H—— had shaken the latter warmly by the hand, and said a few words in the ear of Captain Brooks, adding: "Walter will tell you more, and how to communicate with me."

"Thank you, thank you," replied the hunter, wringing his hand hard. "A friend in need is a friend indeed. I do not want it, but I thank you as much as if I did; but you shall hear if I do, for somehow I guess you are not the man to say what you don't mean."

After seeing his two companions row down the stream a few yards, the young nobleman turned to the boatmen who accompanied him, saying: "Now, my lads, I want to make a change of our arrangements, and to go back the short way by which we came. I did not interrupt our good friend Woodchuck, because he was anxious about my safety. There are some Indians in the forest, and he feared I might get scalped. However, we shot a panther there which we could not stay to skin, as their business in Albany was pressing. Now I want the skin, and am not afraid of the Indians—are you?"

The men laughed, and replied in the negative, saying that there were none of the redmen there but four or five Oneidas and Mohawks, but adding that the way, though shorter, was much more difficult and bushy, and therefore they must have more pay. Lord H——, however, was less difficult to deal with than Captain Brooks, and yielded readily to their demands.

Each of the men then armed himself with a rifle and took a bag of parched corn with him, and the three set out. Lord H—— undertook to guide them to the spot where the panther lay, and not a little did they wonder at the accuracy and precision with which his military habits of observation enabled him to direct them step by step. He took great care not to let them approach the spot where the dead Indian had been slain, but turning about a quarter of a mile to the south, led them across the thicket to within a very few yards of the object of his search. It was soon found, when they came near the place, and about half an hour was employed in taking off the skin and packing it up for carriage.

"Now," said Lord H——, "will you two undertake to have this skin properly cured and dispatched by the first trader going west to the Oneida village?"

The men readily agreed to do so if well paid for it, but, of course, required further directions, saying there were a dozen or more Oneida villages.

"It will be sure to reach its destination," said Lord H——, "if you tell the bearer to deliver it to Otaitsa, which, I believe, means the Blossom, the daughter of Black Eagle, the sachem. Say that it comes from Walter Prevost."

"Oh, aye," answered the boatmen, "it shall be done; but we shall have to pay the man who carries it."

The arrangement in regard to payment was soon made, though it was somewhat exorbitant; but to insure that the commission was faithfully executed, Lord H—— reserved a portion of the money, to be given when he heard that the skin had been delivered.

The rest of the journey was passed without interruption or difficulty, and at an early hour of the evening the young nobleman stood once more at the door of his fellow countryman's house.

CHAPTER VI

THE return of Lord H—— without his guide and companion, Captain Brooks, caused some surprise in Mr. Prevost and his daughter, who had not expected to see any of the party before a late hour of the following evening. Not choosing to explain, in the presence of Edith, the cause of his parting so suddenly from the hunter, the young nobleman merely said that circumstances had led him to conclude it would be advisable to send Woodchuck in the boat with Walter, to Albany, and his words were uttered in so natural and easy a tone that Edith, unconscious that her presence put any restraint upon his communication with her father, remained seated in their pleasant little parlor till the hour for the evening meal.

"Well, my lord," said Mr. Prevost, after the few first words of explanation had passed, "did you meet with any fresh specimens of the Indian in your short expedition?"

The question might have been a somewhat puzzling one for a man who did not want to enter into any particulars, but Lord H—— replied with easy readiness:

"Only one. Him we saw only for a moment, and he did not speak with us."

"They are a very curious race," said Mr. Prevost, "and albeit not very much given to ethnological studies, I have often puzzled myself as to whence they sprang, and how they made their way over to this continent."

Lord H—— smiled. "I fear I cannot help you," he said. "Mine is a coarse and unstudious profession, you know, my dear sir, and leads one much more to look at things as they are than to inquire how they came about.

It strikes me at once, however, that in mere corporeal characteristics the Indian is very different from any race I ever beheld, if I may judge by the few individuals I have seen."

"Bating the grace and dignity," said Edith, gayly, "I do think that what my father would call the finest specimens of the human animal are to be found among the Indians. Look at our dear little Otaita, for instance. Can anything be more beautiful, more graceful, more perfect than her whole face and form?"

Lord H—— smiled and slightly bowed his head, saying: "Now many a fair lady, Miss Prevost, would naturally expect a very gallant reply, and I might make one without a compliment, in good cool blood, and upon calm, mature consideration. I am very poorly versed, however, in civil speeches, and therefore I will only say that I think I have seen white ladies as beautiful, as graceful, and as perfect as your fair young friend, together with the advantage of a better complexion. But at the same time I will admit that she is exceedingly beautiful, and not only that but very charming, and very interesting, too. Hers is not exactly the style of beauty I admire the most, but certainly hers is perfect in its kind, and my young friend Walter seems to think so, too."

A slight flush passed over Edith's cheek, and her eyes instantly turned toward her father. But Mr. Prevost only laughed, saying: "If they were not so young, I should be afraid that my son would marry the sachem's daughter, and perhaps in the end take to the tomahawk and the scalping knife. But joking apart, Otaita is a very singular little creature. I never can bring myself to feel that she is an Indian—a savage, in short, when I hear her low, melodious voice, with its peculiar song-like sort of intonation, and see the grace and dignity with which she moves, and the ease and propriety with which she adapts herself to every European custom. I have to look at her bead-embroidered petticoat and her leggings and moccasins before I can

bring it home to my mind that she is not some very high-bred lady of the court of France or England. Then she is so fair, too; but that is probably from care, and the lack of that exposure to the sun which may at first have given and then perpetuated the Indian tint. To use an old homely expression, she is the apple of her father's eye, and he is as careful of her as of a jewel, after his own particular fashion."

"She is a dear creature," said Edith, warmly, "all soul, and heart, and feeling. Thank God, too, she is a Christian, and you cannot fancy, my lord, what marvellous stores of information the little creature has. She knows that England is an island in the midst of the salt sea, and she can write and read our tongue nearly as well as she speaks it. She has a holy hatred of the French, however, and would not speak a word of their language for the world, for all her information and a good share of her ideas come from our good friend Mr. Gore, who has carried John Bull completely into the heart of the wilderness and kept him there perfect in a sort of crystallized state. Had we but a few more men such as himself amongst the Indian tribes, there would be no fear of any wavering in the friendship of the Five Nations. There goes an Indian now past the window. We shall have him in here in a moment, for they stand upon no ceremony—no, he is speaking to Antony, the negro boy. How curiously he peeps about him—he must be looking for somebody he does not find."

Lord H—— rose and went to the window, and in a minute or two after the Indian stalked quietly away and disappeared in the forest.

"What could he want?" said Edith. "It is strange he did not come in. I will ask Antony what he sought here," and going to the door she called the gardener boy up and questioned him.

"He want Captain Woodchuck, Missa," replied the lad. "He ask if he not lodge here last night. I tell him yes, but Woodchuck go away early this morning, and not come

back since. He 'quire very much about him, and who went with him. I tell him Massa Walter and de strange gentleman, but both leave him soon. Massa Walter go straight to Albany, strange gentleman come back here."

"Did he speak English?" asked Edith.

"Few words," replied the negro. "I speak few words Indian. So patch 'em together make many, missy;" and he laughed with that peculiar, unmeaning laugh with which his race are accustomed to distinguish anything they consider witty.

The whole conversation was heard by the two gentlemen within. On Mr. Prevost it had no effect but to call a cynical smile upon his lips, but the case was different with Lord H——. He saw that the deed which had been done in the forest was known to the Indians; that its doer had been recognized, and that the hunt was up; and he rejoiced to think that poor Woodchuck was already far beyond pursuit. Anxious, however, to gain a fuller insight into the character and habits of a people of whom, as yet, he had obtained but a glimpse, he continued to converse with Mr. Prevost in regard to the aboriginal races, and learned several facts which by no means tended to decrease the uneasiness which the events of the morning had produced.

"The Indians," said his host, in answer to a leading question, "are, as you say, a very revengeful people, but not more so than many other barbarous nations. Indeed, in many of their feelings and habits they greatly resemble a people I have heard of in central Asia, called Alghanns. Both, in common with almost all barbarians, look upon revenge as a duty imperative upon every family and every tribe. They modify their ideas, indeed, in case of war, although it is very difficult to bring about peace after war has commenced; but if any individual of a tribe is killed by another person in time of peace, nothing but the blood of the murderer can satisfy the family or the tribe, if he can be caught. They will pursue him for weeks and months, and employ every stratagem which their fertile brains can

suggest to entrap him, till they feel quite certain that he is beyond their reach. This perseverance proceeds from a religious feeling, for they believe that the spirit of their dead relation can never enter the happy hunting grounds till his blood has been atoned for by that of the slayer."

"But if they cannot catch the slayer," asked Lord H——, "what do they do then?"

"I used a wrong expression," replied Mr. Prevost. "I should have said the blood of some other victim. It is their duty, according to their ideas, to sacrifice the slayer. If satisfied that he is perfectly beyond their power, they strive to get hold of his nearest relation. If they cannot do that, they take a man of his tribe or nation and sacrifice him. It is all done very formally, and with all sorts of consideration and consultation, for in these bloody rites they are the most deliberate people in the world, and the most persevering, also."

A few days before, Lord H—— might have plainly and openly told all the occurrences of the morning in the ears of Edith Prevost, but sensations had been springing up in his breast which made him more tender of her feelings, more careful of creating alarm and anxiety, and he kept his painful secret well till after the evening meal was over, and she had retired to her chamber. Then, however, he stopped Mr. Prevost just as that gentleman was raising a light to hand to his guest, and said: "I am afraid, my good friend, we cannot go to bed just yet. I have something to tell you which, from all I have heard since it occurred, appears to me of much greater importance than at first. Whether anything can be done to avert the evil consequences, or not, I cannot tell; but at all events, it is as well that you and I should talk the matter over."

He then related to Mr. Prevost all the events of the morning, and was sorry to perceive that gentleman's face assuming a deeper and deeper gloom as he proceeded.

"This is most unfortunate, indeed," said Mr. Prevost, at length. "I quite acquit our poor friend Brooks of any

evil intent, but to slay an Indian at all, so near our house, and especially an Oneida, was most unlucky. That tribe or nation, as they call themselves, from the strong personal regard, I suppose, which has grown up accidentally between their chief and myself, has always shown the greatest kindness and friendship toward myself and my family. Before this event I should have felt myself in any of their villages as much at home as by my own fireside, and I am sure that each man felt himself as secure on any part of the lands granted to me as if he were in his own lodge. But now, as they will call it, their blood has stained my very mat, and the consequences no one can foresee. Woodchuck has himself escaped. He has no relations or friends on whom they can wreak their vengeance."

"Surely," exclaimed Lord H——, "they will never visit his offence on you or yours?"

"I trust not," replied Mr. Prevost, after a moment's thought, "but yet I cannot feel exactly sure. They will take a white man for their victim—an Englishman—one of the same nation as the offender. Probably it may not matter much to them who it is, and the affectionate regard which they entertain toward us may turn the evil aside. But yet these Indians have a sort of fanaticism in their religion, as well as we have in ours—the station and the dignity of the victim which they offer up enters into their consideration—they like to make a worthy and an honorable sacrifice, as they consider it; and just as this spirit moves them or not, they may think that anyone will do for their purpose, or that they are required by their god of vengeance to immolate someone dear to themselves, in order to dignify the sacrifice."

"This is indeed a very sad view of the affair which had never struck me," replied Lord H——, "and it may be well to consider, my dear sir, what is the best and the safest course. I must now tell you one of the objects which made me engage your son to carry my dispatches to Albany. It seemed to me, from all I have heard during my

short residence with you, especially during my conference with Sir William Johnson, that the unprotected state of this part of the country left Albany itself and the settlements around it unpleasantly exposed. We know that on a late occasion it was Dieskau's intention, if he had succeeded in defeating Sir William and capturing Fort George, to make a dash at the capital of the province. He was defeated, but there is reason to believe that Montcalm, a man much his superior both in energy and skill, entertained the same views, although I know not what induced him to retreat so hastily after his black and bloody triumph at Fort William Henry. He may seize some other opportunity, and I can perceive nothing whatsoever to impede his progress or delay him for an hour, if he can make himself master of the few scattered forts which lie between Albany and Carrillon or Ticonderoga. In the circumstances, I have strongly urged that a small force should be thrown forward to a commanding point on the river Hudson, not many miles from this place, which I examined as I came hither, with an advanced post or two still nearer to your house. My own regiment I have pointed out as better fitted for the service than any other, and I think that if my suggestions are attended to, as I doubt not they will be, we can give you efficient protection. But I think," continued the young nobleman, speaking more slowly and emphatically, "that with two young people so justly dear to you—with a daughter so beautiful and in every way so charming, and so gallant and noble a lad as Walter, whose high spirit and adventurous character will expose him continually to any snares that may be set for him, it will be much better for you to retire with them both to Albany, at least till such time as you know that the spirit of Indian vengeance has been satisfied, and that the real peril has passed."

Mr. Prevost mused for several minutes, and then replied: "The motives you suggest are certainly very strong, my lord, but I have strange ways of viewing such subjects, and I must have time to consider whether it is fair and

right to my fellow countrymen scattered over this district to withdraw from my share of the peril which all who remain would have to encounter. Do not argue with me upon the subject to-night—I will think over it well, and doubt not that I shall view the plan you have suggested with all the favor that paternal love can afford. I will also keep my mind free to receive any further reasons you may have to produce. But I must first consider quietly and alone. There is no need of immediate decision, for these people, according to their own code, are bound to make themselves perfectly sure that they cannot get possession of the actual slayer before they choose another victim. It is clear from what the Indian said to the negro boy, that they know the hand that did the deed, and they must search for poor Brooks first, and practice every device to allure him back before they immolate another. Let us both think over the matter well and confer to-morrow.”

Thus saying, he shook hands with Lord H——, and they retired to their several chambers with very gloomy and apprehensive thoughts.

Next morning Mr. Prevost was aroused by a distant knocking at the huts where the outdoor servants slept, and then by a repetition of the sound at the door of the house itself. Rising hastily, he got down in time to see the door opened by old Agrippa, and found a man on horseback bearing a large official-looking letter addressed to Major-General Lord H——.

It proved to be a dispatch from Sir William Johnson, requesting both Lord H—— and himself to attend a meeting of some of the chiefs of the Five Nations, which was to be held at Johnson Castle, on the Mohawk, in the course of the following day. The distance was not very great, but still the difficulty of traveling required the two gentlemen to set out at once in order to reach the place of rendezvous before night, and neither liked to neglect what they considered a duty.

“I will mount my horse as soon as it can be got ready,”

said Lord H——, when he had read the letter and shown it to Mr. Prevost. "I suppose, in existing circumstances, you will not think it advisable to accompany me?"

"Most certainly I will go with you, my lord," replied his host. "As I said last night, the danger, though very certain, is not immediate. Weeks, months may pass before these Indians feel assured that they cannot obtain possession of the actual slayer of their red brother; and as many of the Oneidas will probably be present at this talk, as they call it, I may perhaps (though it is very doubtful) gain some insight into their thoughts and intentions. I will take my daughter with me, however, for I should not like to leave her here altogether alone. Her preparations may delay us for half an hour, but still we have ample time, and the horse of the messenger, who will act as our guide, must have some little time to take rest and food."

A very brief time was spent at breakfast, and then the whole party set out on horseback, followed by a negro leading a pack-horse, and preceded by the messenger of Sir William Johnson. Mr. Prevost, the messenger, and the negro, were all armed; but Lord H——, who had hitherto worn nothing but the common riding suit in which he had first presented himself, except in his unfortunate expedition with Captain Brooks, had now donned the splendid uniform of a major-general in the British service, and was merely armed with his sword and pistols in the holsters of his saddle.

The journey passed without incident. Not a human being was seen for seventeen or eighteen miles, though here and there a small log hut, apparently deserted, testified to the efforts of a new race to wrest their hunting grounds from an earlier people—efforts too soon, too sadly, and too cruelly to be consummated. The softer light of early morning died away, and then succeeded a warmer period of the day, when the heat became very oppressive; for in the midst of those deep forests, with no wind stirring, the

change from summer to winter is not felt so rapidly as in more open lands. About an hour after noon they proposed to stop, rest the horses, and take some refreshment, and a spot was selected where some fine oaks spread their large limbs over a beautifully clear little lake or pond, the view across which presented peeps of a distant country, with some blue hills of no very great elevation appearing above the tops of the trees.

At the end of an hour the party again mounted and pursued their way, still on through forests and valleys, across streams and by the sides of lakes, till at length, just as the evening sun was reaching the horizon, a visible change took place in the aspect of the country: spots were seen which had been cultivated, where harvests had grown and been reaped, and then a house gleamed here and there through the forest, and blue wreaths of smoke might be seen rising up. Tracks of cart wheels channeled the forest path; a cart or wagon was drawn up near the roadside; high piles of firewood showed preparation against the bitter winter; and everything indicated that the travelers were approaching some new but prosperous settlement.

Soon all traces of the primeval woods, except those which the little party left behind them, disappeared, and a broad tract of well cultivated country spread out before them, with a fine river bounding it at the distance of more than a mile. The road, too, was comparatively good and broad, and half way between the forest and the river that road divided into two, one branch going straight on, and another leading up the course of the stream.

"Is Sir William at the Hall or at his Castle?" asked Mr. Prevost, raising his voice to reach the ears of his guide, who kept a little in front.

"He said, sir, to take you on to the Hall if you should come on, sir," replied the messenger. "There is a great number of Indians up at the Castle already, and he thought you might perhaps not like to be with them altogether."

"Probably not," replied Mr. Prevost, drily; and they

rode on upon the direct road till, passing two or three smaller houses, they came in sight of a very large and handsome edifice, built of wood indeed, but somewhat in the style of a European house of the reign of George the First. As they approached the gates, Sir William Johnson himself, now in the full costume of an officer of the British army, came down the steps to meet and welcome them; and little less ceremonious politeness did he display in the midst of the wild woods of America than if he had been at the moment in the halls of St. James's. With stately grace he lifted Edith from her horse, greeted Lord H—— with a deferential bow, shook Mr. Prevost by the hand, and then led them himself to rooms which seemed to have been prepared for them.

"Where is my friend Walter?" he said, as he was about to leave Mr. Prevost to some short repose. "What has induced him to deny his old acquaintance the pleasure of his society? Ha, Mr. Prevost, does he think to find metal more attractive at your lonely dwelling? Perhaps he may be mistaken, for let me tell you the beautiful Otaitsa is here—here in this very house; for our good friend Gore has so completely Anglified her, that what between her Christianity, her beauty, and her delicacy, I believe she is afraid to trust herself with four or five hundred red warriors at the Castle."

He spoke in a gay and jesting tone, and everyone knows the blessed facility which parents have of shutting their eyes to the love affairs of their children. Mr. Prevost did not in the least perceive anything in the worthy general's speech but a good-humored joke at the boyish fondness of his son for a pretty Indian girl, and he hastened to excuse Walter's absence by telling Sir William that he had been sent to Albany on business by Lord H——. He then inquired, somewhat anxiously: "Is our friend the Black Eagle here with his daughter?"

"He is here on the ground," replied Sir William, "but not in the house. His Indian habits are of too old standing

to be rooted out like Otaitsa's, and he prefers a bearskin and his own blue blanket to the best bed and quilt in the house. I offered him such accommodation as it afforded, but he declined, with the dignity of a prince refusing the hospitality of a cottage."

"Does he seem in a good humor to-day?" asked Mr. Prevost, hesitating whether he should tell Sir William at a moment when they were likely to be soon interrupted, the event which had caused so much apprehension in his own mind. "You know he is somewhat variable in his mood."

"I never remarked it," replied the other. "I think he is the most civilized savage I ever saw, far more than King Hendrick, though the one, since his father's death, wears a blue coat and the other does not. He did seem a little grave indeed, but the shadows of Indian mirth and gravity are so faint, it is difficult to distinguish them."

While these few words were passing Mr. Prevost had decided upon his course, and he merely replied: "Well, Sir William, pray let Otaitsa know that Edith is here; they will soon be in each other's arms, for the two girls love like sisters."

A few words sprung to Sir William Johnson's lips, which, had they been uttered, might perhaps have opened Mr. Prevost's eyes, at least to the suspicions of his friend. He was on the eve of answering, "And some day they may be sisters," but he checked himself, and nothing but the smile which should have accompanied the words made any reply.

When left alone, the thoughts of Mr. Prevost reverted at once to more pressing considerations. "The old chief knows the event," he said to himself; "he has heard of it—heard the whole, probably—it is wonderful how rapidly intelligence is circulated amongst this people from mouth to mouth."

He was well nigh led away into speculations regarding the strange celerity with which news can be carried orally, and was beginning to calculate how much distance to travel would be saved in a given space, by one man shouting the

tidings to another at a distance, when he forced back his mind into the track it had left, and came to the full conclusion from his knowledge of the character of the parties, and from all that he had heard, that certainly the Black Eagle was cognizant of the death of one of his tribe by the hand of Captain Brooks, and probably—though not certainly—had communicated the facts, but not his views and purposes, to his daughter, whose keen eyes were likely to discover much of that which he intended to conceal.

CHAPTER VII

THERE was a curious and motley assembly, that night, in the halls of Sir William Johnson. There were several ladies and gentlemen from Albany, several young military men, and two or three persons of a class now extinct, but who then drove a thriving commerce, and whose peculiar business it was to trade with the Indians. Some of the latter were exceedingly well educated men, and one or two of them were persons not only of enlightened minds, but of enlarged views and heart. The others were mere brutal speculators, whose whole end and object in life was to wring as much from the savages and give as little in return as possible. Besides these, an Indian chief would, from time to time, appear in the rooms, often marching through in perfect silence, observing all that was going on with dignified gravity, and then going back to his companions at the Castle. Amongst the rest was Otaitsa, still in her Indian costume, but evidently in gala dress, of the finest cloth and the most elaborate embroidery. Not only was she perfectly at her ease, talking to everyone, laughing with many; but the sort of shrinking, timid tenderness which gave her so great a charm in the society of the few whom she loved had given place to a wild spirit of gaiety but little in accordance with the character of her nation.

She glided hither and thither through the room; she rested in one place hardly for a moment; her jests were as light, and sometimes as sharp as those of almost any Parisian dame; and when one of the young officers ventured to speak to her somewhat lightly as the mere Indian girl, she piled upon him a mass of ridicule that wrung tears of

laughter from the eyes of one or two older men standing near.

"I know not what has come to the child to-night," said Mr. Gore, who was seated near Edith in one of the rooms; "a wild spirit seems to have seized upon her, which is quite unlike her whole character and nature—unlike the character of her people, too, or I might think that the savage had returned notwithstanding all my care."

"Perhaps it is the novelty and excitement of the scene," said Edith.

"Oh no," answered the missionary, "there is nothing new in this scene to her. She has been at these meetings several times during the last two or three years, but never seemed to yield to their influence as she has done to-night."

"She has hardly spoken a word to me," said Edith. "I hope she will not forget the friends who love her."

"No fear of that, my dear," replied Mr. Gore, "Otaita is all heart, and that heart a gentle one; under its influence is she acting now. It throbs with something that we do not know; and those light words that make us smile to hear, have sources deep within her—perhaps of bitterness."

"I think I have heard her say," answered Edith, "that you educated her from her childhood."

"When first I joined the people of the Stone," replied the missionary, "I found her there a young child of three years old. Her mother was just dead, and although her father bore his grief with the stern, gloomy stoicism of his nation, and neither suffered tear to fall nor sigh to escape his lips, I could see plainly enough that he was struck with grief such as the Indian seldom feels and never shows. He received me most kindly, and made my efforts with his people easy; and though I know not to this hour whether with himself I have been successful in communicating blessed light, he gave his daughter altogether up to my charge, and with her I have not failed. I fear in him the savage is too deeply rooted to be ever wrung forth, but her I have made one of Christ's flock indeed."

It seemed as if by a sort of instinct that Otaita discovered that she was the subject of conversation between her two friends. Twice she looked around at them from the other side of the room, and then she glided across and seated herself beside Edith. For a moment she sat in silence there, and then leaning her head gracefully on her beautiful companion's shoulder, she said in a low whisper: "Do not close thine eyes this night, my sister, till thou seest me;" and then starting up, she mingled with the little crowd again.

It was still early in the night when Edith retired to the chamber assigned for her; for even in the most fashionable society of those times, people had not learned to drive the day into the night, and make morning and evening meet. Her room was a large and handsome one, and though plainly, it was sufficiently furnished. No forest, as at her dwelling, interrupted the beams of the rising moon, and she sat and contemplated the ascent of the queen of night as she soared grandly over the distant trees. The conduct of Otaita during that night had puzzled her, and the few whispered words had excited her curiosity, for it must not be forgotten that Edith was altogether unacquainted with the fact of one of the Orneidas having been slain by the hands of Captain Brooks within little more than two miles of her own abode. She proceeded to make her toilet for the night, however, and was almost undressed when she heard the door of her room open quietly, and Otaita stole in and cast her arms around her.

"Ah, my sister," she said, "I have longed to talk with you;" and seating herself by her side, she leaned her head again upon Edith's shoulder, but remained silent for several minutes. The fair English girl knew that it was better to let her take her own time and her own way to speak whatever she had to say, but Otaita remained so long without uttering a word that an undefinable feeling of alarm spread over her young companion. She felt her bosom heave as if with struggling sighs, she even felt some

warm drops like tears fall upon her shoulder, and yet Otaita remained without speaking, till at length Edith said, in a gentle and encouraging tone: "What is it, my sister? There can surely be nothing you should be afraid to utter to my ear."

"Not afraid," answered Otaita, and then she relapsed into silence again.

"But why do you weep, my sweet Blossom?" said Edith, after pausing for a moment or two to give her time to recover her composure.

"Because one of your people has killed one of my people," answered the Indian girl, sorrowfully. "Is not that enough to make me weep?"

"Indeed," exclaimed Edith, "I am much grieved to hear it, Blossom; but when did this happen, and how?"

"It happened but yesterday," replied the girl, "and but a little toward the morning from your own house, my sister. It was a sad day! It was a sad day!"

"But I trust it was none near and dear to the Blossom or to the Black Eagle," said Edith, putting her arms around her and trying to soothe her.

"No, no," answered Otaita, "he was a bad man, a treacherous man, one whom my father loved not. But that matters little. They will have blood for his blood."

The truth flashed upon Edith's mind at once; for though less acquainted with the Indian habits than her brother or her father, she knew enough of their revengeful spirit to feel sure that they would seek the death of the murderer with untiring eagerness, and she questioned her sweet companion earnestly as to all the particulars of the sad tale. Otaita told her all she knew, which was indeed nearly all that could be told. The man called the Snake, she said, had been shot by the white man Woodchuck, in the wood to the northeast of Mr. Prevost's house. Intimation of the fact had spread like fire in dry grass through the whole of the Oneidas, who were flocking to the meeting at Sir

William Johnson's Castle, and from them it would run through the whole tribe.

"Woodchuck has escaped," she said, "or he would have been slain ere now; but they will have his life yet, my sister;" and then she added, slowly and sorrowfully, "or the life of some other white man, if they cannot catch this one."

The words presented to Edith's mind a sad and terrible idea—one more fearful in its vagueness and uncertainty of outline than in the darkness of particular points. That out of a narrow and limited population someone was foredoomed to be slain; that out of a small body of men, all feeling almost as brethren, one was to be marked out for slaughter; that one family was to lose husband or father or brother, and no one could tell which, made her feel like one out of a herd of wild animals cooped up within the toils of the hunters.

Edith's first object was to learn more from her young companion, but Otaita had told almost all she knew.

"What they will do I know not," she said; "they do not tell us women. But I fear, Edith, I fear very much; for they say our brother Walter was with the Woodchuck when the deed was done."

"Not so! not so!" cried Edith. "Had he been so, I should have heard of it. He has gone to Albany, and had he been present I am sure he would have stopped it if he could. If your people tell truth they will acknowledge that he was not there."

Otaita raised her head suddenly with a look of joy, exclaiming: "I will make her tell the truth were she as cunning a snake as he was—but yet, my sister Edith, someone will have to die if they find not the man they seek."

The last words were spoken in a melancholy tone again; but then she started up, repeating, "I will make her tell the truth."

"Can you do so?" asked Edith. "Snakes are always very crafty."

"I will try at least," answered the girl; "but oh, my sister, it were better for you and Walter, and your father, too, to be away. When a storm is coming, we try to save what is most precious. There is yet ample time to go, for the red people are not rash, and do not act hastily, as you white people do."

"But is there no means," asked Edith, "of learning what the intention of the nation really is?"

"I know of none," answered the girl, "that can be depended upon with certainty. The people of the Stone change no more than the stone from which they sprang. The storm beats upon them, the sun shines upon them, and there is little difference on the face of the rock. Yet let your father watch well when he is at the great talk to-morrow. Then if the priest is very smooth and soft-spoken, and if the Black Eagle is stern and silent, wraps his blanket over his left breast, be sure that something sad is meditated. That is all that I can tell you—but I will make this woman speak the truth if there be truth in her, and that, too, before the chiefs of the nation. Now, sister, lie down to rest. Otaitsa is going at once to her people."

"But are you not afraid?" asked Edith. "It is a dark night, dear Blossom. Lie down with me and wait the morning sunshine."

"I have no fear," answered the Indian girl; "nothing will hurt me. There are times, sister, when a spirit enters into us that defies all and fears nothing. So it has been with me this night. The only thing I dreaded to face was my own thought, and it I would not suffer to rest upon anything till I had spoken with you. Now, however, I have better hopes. I will go forth and I will make her tell the truth."

Thus saying, she left Edith's chamber, and about an hour and a half after she might be seen standing beside her father, who was seated near a fire kindled in one corner of the court attached to a large house, or rather fort, built by Sir William Johnson on the banks of the Mohawk,

and called by him his Castle. Round the sachem, forming a complete circle, sat a number of the head men of the Oneidas, each in that peculiar crouching position which has been rendered familiar to our eyes by numerous paintings. The court and the Castle itself were well nigh filled with Indians of other tribes of the Five Nations, but none took any part in the proceedings of the Oneidas but themselves, and the only stranger who was present in the circle was Sir William Johnson. He was still fully dressed in his British uniform, and seated on a chair in an attitude of much dignity, with his left hand resting on the hilt of his sword. With the exception of that weapon he had no arms whatever; and indeed it was his custom to sleep frequently in the midst of his red friends utterly unarmed and defenceless. The occasion seemed a solemn one, for all faces were very grave, and a complete silence prevailed for several minutes.

"Bring in the woman," said Black Eagle, at length; "bring her in, and let her speak the truth."

"Of what do you accuse her, Otaita?" asked Sir William Johnson, fixing his eyes upon his beautiful guest.

"Of lying to the sachem and to her brethren," answered Otaita. "Her breath has been full of the poison of the Snake."

"Thou hearest," said the Black Eagle, turning to a woman of some one or two and twenty years of age. "What sayest thou?"

"I lie not," answered the woman, in the Indian tongue. "I saw him lift the rifle and shoot my brother dead."

"Who did it?" asked Black Eagle, gravely and calmly.

"The Woodchuck," answered the woman. "He did it. I know his face too well."

"Believe her not," answered Otaita, "the Woodchuck was ever a friend of our nation. He is our brother. He would not slay an Oneida."

"But he was my brother's enemy," answered the woman. "There was vengeance between them."

"Vengeance on thy brother's part," answered the old chief. "More likely he to slay the Woodchuck than the Woodchuck to slay him."

"If she have a witness, let her bring him forward," said Otaita. "We will believe her by the tongue of another."

"I have none," cried the woman, vehemently; "none was present but ourselves, but I saw him kill my brother with my own eyes, and I cry for his blood."

"Didst thou not say that there were two white men with him?" asked Otaita, raising up her right hand. "Then in this thou hast lied to the sachem and thy brethren, and who shall say whether thou speakest the truth now."

A curious sort of drowsy hum ran round the circle of the Indians, and one old man said: "She has spoken well."

The woman, in the meanwhile, stood silent and abashed, with her eyes fixed upon the ground, and Black Eagle said in a grave tone: "There was none?"

"No," said the woman, lifting her look firmly, "there was none; but I saw two others in the wood hard by, and I was sure they were his companions."

"That is guile," said Black Eagle, sternly. "Thou didst say that there were two men with him, one the young pale-face, Walter, and the other a tall stranger, and brought a cloud over our eyes, and made us think that they were present at the death."

"Then methinks, Black Eagle," said Sir William Johnson, using their language nearly as fluently as his own, "there is no faith to be put in the woman's story, and we cannot tell what has happened."

"Not so, my brother," answered Black Eagle. "We know that the Snake was slain yesterday, before the sun had reached the pine tops. We believe, too, that the Woodchuck slew him, for there was an enmity between them; and the ball which killed him was a large ball, such as we have never seen but in that man's pouch."

"That is doubtful evidence," said Sir William, "and I

trust my brother will let vengeance cease till he have better witnesses."

The Indians remained profoundly silent for more than a minute, and then the old man who had spoken once before, replied: "If our brother will give us up Woodchuck, vengeance shall cease."

"That I cannot do," answered Sir William Johnson. "First, I have no power; secondly, he may be tried by our laws; but I will not lie to you. If he can show he did it in self-defence, he will be set free."

Again there was a long silence, and then Black Eagle rose, saying: "We must take counsel."

His face was very grave, and as he spoke he drew the large blue blanket which covered his shoulders over his left breast, with the gesture which Otaita had described to Edith, as indicating some dark determination. Sir William Johnson marked the signs he saw, and was too well acquainted with Indian character to believe that their thirst for blood was at all allayed; but neither by expression of countenance, nor by words, did he show any doubt of his red friends, and slept amongst them calmly that night without a fear of the result.

At an early hour on the following morning all the arrangements were made for the great council, or talk, that was about to be held. Some large armchairs were brought forth into the court. A few soldiers were seen moving about, and some negro servants. A number of the guests from the Hall came up about nine o'clock, most of them on horseback; but when all were assembled, the body of white men present were few and insignificant when compared with the multitude of Indians who surrounded them. No one showed or entertained any fear, however, and the conference commenced and passed off with perfect peace and harmony.

It is true that several of the Indian chiefs, and more especially King Hendrick, as he was called, the son of the chief who had been killed near Fort George a year or two

before, had made some complaints against the British government for neglect of the just claims of their red allies. All angry feeling, however, was removed by a somewhat large distribution of presents, and after hearing everything which the Indians had to say, Sir William Johnson rose from the chair in which he had been seated, between Lord H—— and Mr. Prevost, and addressed the assembly in English, according to his invariable custom, when called upon to deal publicly with the heads of the Five Nations, the speech being translated, sentence for sentence, by an interpreter. The whole of his address cannot be given here, but it was skillfully turned to suit the prejudices and conciliate the friendship of the people to whom he spoke. He said that their English father, King George, loved his red children with peculiar affection, but as his lodge was a long way off, he could not always know their wants and wishes. He had very lately, however, shown his great tenderness and consideration for the Five Nations by appointing him, Sir William Johnson, as Indian agent, to make known as speedily as possible all that his red children desired. He then drew a glowing picture of the greatness and majesty of the English monarch, as the Attotarho or chief leader of a thousand different nations, sitting under a pine tree that reached to the sky, and receiving every minute messages from his children in every part of the earth.

A hum of satisfaction from the Indians followed this flight of fancy, and the speaker went on to say that this great chief, their father, had long ago intended to do much for them, and still intended to do so, but that the execution of his benevolent purposes had been delayed and impeded by the machinations of the French, their enemies and his, whom he represented as stealthily lying in wait for all the ships and convoys of goods and presents which were destined for his Indian children, and possessing themselves of them by force or fraud. Rich as he might be, he asked how was it possible that their white father could supply all their wants when he had so many to provide for, and when

so many of his enemies had dug up the tomahawk at once. If the chiefs of the Five Nations, however, he said, would vigorously aid him in his endeavors, King George would speedily drive the French from America; and to show his intention of so doing, he had sent over the great chief on his left hand, Lord H——, and many other mighty warriors, to fight side by side with their red brethren. More, he said, would come on in the ensuing spring, and with the first flower that blossomed under the hemlock trees the English warriors would be ready for the battle, if the Indian chiefs then present would promise them cordial support and co-operation.

It must not be supposed that in employing very exaggerated language Sir William had any intention of deceiving. He merely used figures suited to the comprehension of his auditors, and his speech gave the very highest satisfaction. The unusually large presents which had been distributed, the presence and bearing of the young nobleman, and a natural weariness of the state of semi-neutrality between the French and the English, which they had maintained for some time, disposed the chiefs to grant the utmost he could desire, and the conference broke up with the fullest assurance of support from the heads of the Iroquois tribes—assurances which were faithfully made good in the campaigns which succeeded.

CHAPTER VIII

ALL was pleasant at the house of Sir William Johnson, from which the stateliness of his manner did not at all detract, for when blended with perfect courtesy, as an Irishman can perhaps better than any man blend it, stateliness does not imply restraint. The conference with the Indians had not ended until too late an hour for Mr. Prevost and his companions to return to his dwelling on the day when it took place, and as Walter was not expected with the answers to Lord H—'s dispatches for at least two days more, the party were not unwilling to prolong their stay till the following morning. Several of the guests, indeed, who were proceeding to Albany direct, set out at once for their destination, certain of reaching the well inhabited parts of the country before nightfall; and it was at one time proposed to send a letter by them to young Walter Prevost, directing him to join his father at the Hall. The inconveniences which so frequently ensue from deranging plans already fixed, caused this scheme to be rejected, and while her father, Lord H——, and their host wandered forth for an hour or two along the banks of the beautiful Mohawk, Edith remained at the Hall, not without hope of seeing Otaita present herself, with some intelligence. The beautiful Indian girl, however, did not appear, and gloomy thoughts thronged fast upon poor Edith. She strove to banish them; she schooled herself in regard to anticipating events only possible; but who ever mastered completely those internal warnings of approaching peril or woe, which as often come to cloud our brightest days, as to darken the gloom of an already tempestuous sky? Her chief com-

panion was an old lady nearly related to Sir William, but very deaf and very silent, and she had but small relief in conversation.

In the meantime the three gentlemen and a young aide-de-camp pursued their way amongst the neat farmhouses and mechanics' shops which had gathered round the Hall; Mr. Prevost gave way to thoughts apparently as gloomy as those which haunted his daughter, but in reality not so, for his was a mind of a discursive character, which was easily led by any collateral idea far away from any course which it was at first pursuing; and though he had awakened that morning full of the considerations which had engaged him during the preceding day, he was now busily calculating the results of the meeting which had just been held, and arriving at the conclusions, more just than were reached by many of the great statesmen and politicians of the day.

Lord H——, on his part, paid no little attention to the demeanor and all the proceedings of their host. The character of his mind was the exact reverse of that of Mr. Prevost, attaching itself keenly to an object, and turned from its contemplation with difficulty. His thoughts still dwelt upon the consequences which were likely to ensue from the death of the Oneida by the hands of Captain Brooks, without anything like alarm, indeed, but with careful forethought for those who in a few short days had won for themselves a greater share of the warmer affections which lay hidden in his heart than he often bestowed upon any one. As they quitted the door of the house a mere trifle called his attention to something peculiar in the conduct of Sir William Johnson, and led him to believe that the mind of that officer was not altogether at ease, notwithstanding the favorable result of the meeting with the Indians. After they had taken a step or two upon their way, Sir William Johnson paused suddenly, turned back, and ordered a servant to run up to the top of the hill and there watch until he returned. "Mark well which paths they

take," he said, without specifying the persons of whom he spoke, "and let me hear if you see anything peculiar."

The man seemed to understand him perfectly, and the parties, as I have said, walked on, Lord H—— watching everything with the utmost attention. In the course of their ramble not less than some nine or ten persons came up at different times, and spoke a word or two to Sir William Johnson. First it was a negro, then a soldier, then an Irish servant, then another white man, but with features of a strongly marked Indian character. Each seemed to give some information in a few words uttered in a low tone, and each departed as soon as they were spoken, some with a brief answer, some with none.

The evening which succeeded their walk passed somewhat differently from the preceding one. There were fewer persons present, the conversation was more general and intimate, and Sir William Johnson, seating Edith at the old-fashioned instrument which in those days supplied the lack of pianofortes, asked for a song which it seems he had heard her sing before. She complied without any hesitation, with a sufficient skill and management of her voice to show that she had been well taught, but with tones so rich, so pure, and so melodious, that every sound in the room was instantly hushed, and Lord H—— approached nearer and nearer to listen.

Lord H—— was full not only of the love but of the sense of music, and he drew closer and closer to Edith as she sang, and at length hung over her with his face turned away from the other guests in the room, and bearing written on it feelings which he hardly yet knew were in his heart. Sir William Johnson was standing on the other side of the beautiful girl's chair, and as she concluded the stanza before the last he raised his eyes suddenly to the face of Lord H—— with a look of great satisfaction. What he saw there made him start and then smile, for the characters written on the young nobleman's countenance were too plain to be mistaken; and Sir William Johnson, who was

not without his share of worldly wisdom, at once divined that Edith Prevost was likely to be a peeress of England.

"What a fine musician she is," said the older general to the young nobleman, after he had conducted Edith to her former seat, but before the enthusiasm had subsided. "One would hardly expect to find such music in the wild woods of America."

"She is all music," said Lord H——, in an absent tone, and then added, rousing himself, "but you must not attribute such powers and such perfections altogether to your own land of America, Sir William, for I find that Miss Prevost was educated in Europe."

"Only till she was fourteen," replied the other; "but they are altogether a most remarkable family. If ever girl was perfect, it is herself. Her father, though somewhat too much given to dream, is a man of singular powers of mind; and her brother, Walter, whom I look upon almost as a son, is full of high and noble qualities and energies which, if he lives, will certainly lead him on to greatness."

"I think so," said Lord H——, and there the conversation dropped for the time. The rest of the evening passed on without any incident of note, and by daybreak on the following morning the whole household were on foot. An early breakfast was ready for the travelers, and nothing betrayed much anxiety on the part of their host till the very moment of their departure. As they were about to set forth, however, and just when Edith appeared in her riding habit (or Amazon, as it was then called), and the hat, with large, floating ostrich plumes usually worn at that time by ladies when on horseback, looking lovely enough, it is true, to justify any compliment, Sir William took her by the hand, saying, with a gay and courteous air: "I am going to give you a commission, my fair Hypolita, which is neither more nor less than the command of half a dozen dragoons, whom I wish to go with you for a portion of the way, partly to exercise their horses on a road which

is marvellously cleared of stumps and stones for this part of the country, partly to examine what is going on a little to the northeast, and partly to bring me the pleasant intelligence that you have gone at least half way to your home in safety."

Lord H—— looked in his face in silence, and Edith turned a little pale, but said nothing. Mr. Prevost, however, went directly to the point, saying: "You know of some danger, my good friend. You had better inform us of all the particulars, that we may be upon our guard."

"None whatever, Prevost," answered Sir William, "except the general perils of inhabiting an advanced spot on the frontiers of a savage people, especially when anything has occurred to offend them. You know what we talked about yesterday morning. The Oneidas do not easily forgive, and in this case they will not forgive. But I have every reason to believe that they have taken their way homeward for the present. My people traced them a good way to the west, and it is only from some chance stragglers that there is any danger."

Mr. Prevost mused, without moving to the door, which was open for them to depart, and then said, in a meditating kind of tone: "I do not think they will attack any large party, Sir William, even when satisfied that they cannot get hold of the man who has incensed them. These Indians are a very cunning people, and they often satisfy even their notions of honor by an artifice, especially when two duties, as they consider them, are in opposition to one another. Depend upon it, after what passed yesterday, they will commit no act of national hostility against England. They are pledged to us, and will not break their pledge. They will attack no large party, nor slay any Englishman in open strife, though they may kidnap some solitary individual, and, according to their curious notions of atonement, make him a formal sacrifice in expiation of the blood shed by another."

"You know the Indians well, Prevost," said Sir William,

gravely, "marvellously well, considering the short time you have been amongst them."

"I have had little else to do than to study them," said the other, "and the subject is one of great interest. But do you think I am wrong in the view I take, my good friend?"

"Quite on the contrary," replied Sir William, "and that is the reason I send the soldiers with you. A party of eight or ten will be perfectly secure; and I would certainly advise that for the next two or three months, or till this unlucky dog Brooks, or Woodchuck, as he is called, has been captured, no one should go any distance from his home singly. Such a party as yours might be large enough—I am not sure that my lord's red coat, which I am happy to see he has got on to-day, might not be sufficient protection, for they will not risk anything which they themselves deem an act of hostility against the British government. But still the soldiers will make the matter more secure till you have passed the spot where there is any danger of their being found. I repeat, I know of no peril, but I would fain guard against all where a fair lady is concerned," and he bowed gracefully to Edith.

Little more was said, and, taking leave of their host, Mr. Prevost's party mounted their horses and set out, followed by a corporal's guard of dragoons, a small body of which corps was then stationed in the province of New York, although, from the nature of the country in which hostilities had hitherto been carried on, small opportunity had as yet been afforded them of showing their powers against an enemy. Nor would there have been any very favorable opportunity for doing so in the present instance had Mr. Prevost and his companions been attacked, for though the road they had to travel was broad and open, compared to an ordinary Indian trail, yet, except at one or two points, it was hemmed in with impervious forests, where the action of cavalry would be quite impossible, and under the screen of which a skillful marksman might bring

down his man himself unperceived. But Sir William Johnson was sincere in saying that he believed the very sight of the English soldiers would be quite sufficient protection. The Indians, he knew right well, would avoid anything like a struggle or a contest, and would more especially take care not to come into collision of any kind with the troops of their British allies. It was likely that they would depend upon cunning entirely to obtain a victim wherewith to appease their vengeance, but on this probability he did not choose altogether to rely. He saw them depart, however, with perfect confidence, as the soldiers were with them; and they proceeded without seeing a single human being after they quitted his settlement, till they reached the shores of the small lake near which they had halted on their previous journey, and where they again dismounted to take refreshment.

It was a very pleasant spot, and well fitted for a resting place; nor was repose altogether needless, though the distance already traveled was not great either for man or horse. But the day was exceedingly oppressive, like one of those which come in what is called the Indian summer, when the weather, after many a frosty day, becomes suddenly sultry, as if in the middle of June, and the air, loaded with thin yellow vapor, well deserves the term of "smoky," usually given to it on the western side of the Atlantic. Yet there was no want of air; the wind blew from the southeast, but there was no freshness on the breeze. It was like the sirocco, taking away strength and freshness from all it breathed upon; and the horses, after being freed from the burdens they bore, stood for several minutes with bent heads and heaving sides, without attempting to crop the forest grass beneath the trees.

Thus, repose was sweet, and the look of the little lake was cool and refreshing. The travelers lingered there somewhat after the hour at which they proposed to depart, and it was the negro, who took care of the baggage, who first warned them of the waning of the day.

"Massa forget," he said, "sun go early to bed in October. Twelve mile to go yet, and road wuss nor dis."

"True, true," replied Mr. Prevost, rising. "We had better go on, my lord, for it is now past two, and we shall barely reach home by daylight. I really think, Corporal," he continued, turning to the non-commissioned officer who had been seated with his men hard by, enjoying some of the good things of life, "that we need not trouble you to go farther. There is no trace of any Indians, nor, indeed, any human beings in the forest but ourselves. Had there been so, my good friend Chaudo, here, would have discovered it, for he knows their tracks as well as any of their own people."

"Dat I do," replied the negro to whom he pointed. "No Ingin pass dis road since yesterday, I swear."

"My orders were to go to the big blazed basswood tree, four miles farther," replied the soldier, in a firm but respectful tone, "and I must obey orders."

"You are right," said Lord H——, pleased with the man's demeanor. "What is your name, Corporal?"

"Clitherto, my lord," replied the man, with a military salute; "Corporal Clitherto."

Lord H—— bowed his head, and the party, remounting, pursued their way. The road, however, as the negro had said, was more difficult in advance than it had been nearer to Sir William Johnson's settlement, and it took the whole party an hour to reach the great basswood tree which had been mentioned, and which was marked out from the rest of the forest by three large marks upon the bark, hewn by some surveyor's axe when the road had been laid out. There the party stopped for a moment or two, and with a few words of thanks Mr. Prevost and his companions parted from their escort.

"How dim the air along the path is," said Lord H——, looking on, "and yet the sun, getting to the west, is shining right down it through the valley. One could almost imagine it was filled with smoke."

"This is what we call a smoky day in America," replied Mr. Prevost, "but I never knew the Indian summer come on us with such a wind."

No more was said on that matter at the time, and as the road grew narrower, Mr. Prevost and the negro, as best acquainted with the way, rode first, while Lord H—— followed by Edith's side, conversing with her in quiet and easy tones, but with words which sometimes caused the color to vary a little in her cheek.

Thus they went on for some four miles farther, and the evening was evidently closing round them rapidly, though no ray had yet passed from the sky. Suddenly Mr. Prevost drew in his rein, saying in a low but distinct voice to the negro: "What is that crossing the road?"

"No Ingin!" cried the negro, whose eyes had been constantly bent forward.

"Surely there is smoke drifting across the path," said Mr. Prevost, "and I think I smell it, also."

"I have thought so for some time," said Lord H——, who was now close to them with Edith. "Are fires common in these woods?"

"Not very," answered Mr. Prevost, "but the season has been unusually dry. Good heaven, I hope my fears are not prophetic! I have been thinking all day of what would become of The Lodge if the forest were to take fire."

"We had better ride on as fast as possible," said the young nobleman, "for then if the worst happens we may be able to save some of your property, Mr. Prevost."

"We must be cautious, we must be cautious," said the other, in a thoughtful tone. "Fire is a capricious element, and often runs in a direction the least expected. I have heard of people getting so entangled in a burning wood as not to be able to escape."

"Oh, yes," cried the negro, "when I were little boy, I remember quite well Massa John Bostock and five other men wid him git in pine wood behind Albany, and it catch fire. He run here and dere, but it git all round him and

roast him up black as I be. I saw dem bring in what dey fancied was he, but it no better dan a great pine stump."

"If I remember," said Lord H——, "we passed a high hill somewhere near this spot, where we had a fine, clear view over the whole of the woody region round. We had better make for that at once. The fire cannot yet have reached it, if my remembrance of the distance is correct; for though the wind sets toward us the smoke is, as yet, anything but dense."

"Pray God it be so," said Mr. Prevost, spurring forward, "but I fear it is nearer."

The rest followed as quickly as the stumps and the fallen trees would let them, and at the distance of half a mile began the ascent of the hill to which Lord H—— had alluded. As far as that spot the smoke had been becoming denser and denser every moment, apparently pouring along the valley formed by that hill and another on the left, through which valley, let it be remarked, the small river in which Walter had been seen fishing by Sir William Johnson, but now a broad and very shallow stream, took its course onward toward the Mohawk. As they began to ascend, however, the smoke decreased, and Edith exclaimed joyfully: "I hope, dear father, the fire is farther to the north."

"We shall see, we shall see," said Mr. Prevost, still pushing his horse forward. "The sun is going down fast, and a little haste will be better on all accounts."

In about five minutes more the summit of the hill was reached, at a spot where, in laying out two roads which crossed each other there, the surveyors had cleared away a considerable portion of the wood, leaving, as Lord H—— had said, a clear view over the greater part of the undulating forest country lying in the angle formed by the upper Hudson and the Mohawk. The only sign of man's habitation which could be discovered at any time was the roof and chimneys of Mr. Prevost's house, which in general could be perceived rising above the trees, upon an eminence

a good deal lower than the summit which the travelers had now reached. Now, however, the house could not be seen.

The sight which the country presented was a fine but a terrible one. On the one side the sun, with his lower limb just dipped beneath the forest, was casting up floods of many-colored light, orange and purple, gold, and even green, upon the light, fantastic clouds scattered over the western sky; while above, some fleecy vapors, fleeting quickly along, were all rosy with the touch of his beams. Onward to the east and north, filling up the whole valley between the hill on which they stood and the eminence crowned by Mr. Prevost's house, and forming an almost semi-circular line of some three or four miles in extent, was a dense, reddish-brown cloud of smoke, marking where the fire raged, and softening off at each extreme to a bluish gray. No general flame could be perceived through this heavy cloud, but ever and anon a sudden flash would break across it, not bright and vivid, but dull and half obscured, when the fierce elements got hold of some of the drier and more combustible materials of the forest. Once or twice, too, suddenly at one point of the line or another, a single tree, taller perhaps than the rest, or more inflammable, or garmented in a thick matting of dry vine, would catch the flame and burst forth from the root to the topmost branch, like a tall column of fire; and here and there, too, from what cause I know not—perhaps from an accumulation of dry grass and withered leaves, seized upon by the fire and wind together—a volley of sparks would mingle with the cloud of smoke and float along, for a moment, bright and sparkling, to the westward.

It was a grand but an awful spectacle, and as Mr. Prevost gazed upon it thoughts and feelings crowded into his bosom which even Edith herself could not estimate.

"Look, look, Prevost!" cried Lord H——, after they had gazed during one or two minutes in silence. "The wind is drifting away the smoke! I can see the top of

your house—it is safe, as yet—and will be safe,” he added, “for the wind sets somewhat away from it.”

“Not enough,” said Mr. Prevost, in a dull, gloomy tone. “The slightest change, and it is gone. The house I care not for; the barns, the crops, are nothing! They can be replaced, or I could do without them; but there are things within that house, my lord, I cannot do without.”

“Do you not think we can reach it?” asked Lord H——. “If we were to push our horses into the stream there, we might follow its course up—it seems broad and shallow—and the trees recede from the banks—are there any deep spots in its course?”

“None, massa,” replied the negro.

“Let us try, at all events,” exclaimed Lord H——, turning his horse’s head. “We can come back again if we find the heat and smoke too much for us.”

“My daughter!” said Mr. Prevost, in a tone of deep, strong feeling, “my daughter! Lord H——.”

The young nobleman was silent. The stories he had heard that day, and many he had heard before, of persons getting entangled in burning forests, and never being able to escape—which, while in the first enthusiasm of the moment he thought only of himself and of Mr. Prevost, had seemed to him but visions, wild chimeras—assumed a terrible reality as soon as the name of Edith was mentioned, and he would have shuddered to see the proposal adopted which he had made only the moment before. He was silent then, and Mr. Prevost was the first who spoke.

“I must go,” he said, with gloomy earnestness, after some brief consideration. “I must go, let what will betide.”

He remained for two or three minutes profoundly silent. Then, turning suddenly to Lord H——, he said: “My lord, I am going to entrust to you the dearest thing I have on earth, my daughter—to place her under the safeguard of your honor—to rely for her protection and defence upon your chivalry. As an English nobleman of high name and

fame, I do trust you without a doubt. I must make my way through that fire by some means—I must save some papers—two pictures which I value more than my own life. I will take my good friend Chaudo here with me. I must leave you to conduct Edith to a place of safety.”

“Oh, my father!” cried Edith, but he went on, without heeding her:

“If you follow that road,” he continued, “you will come at the distance of some seven miles, to a good-sized farmhouse on the left of the road. The men are most likely out watching the progress of the fire, but you will find the women within, and good and friendly they are, though homely and uneducated. I have no time to stop for further directions. Edith, my child, God bless you! Do not cloud our parting with a doubt of heaven’s protection. Should anything occur—and be it as He wills—you and Walter will find with the lawyers at Albany all papers referring to this small farm, and to the little we have in England. God bless you, my child! God bless you!” and thus saying, he turned and rode fast down the hill, beckoning to the negro to follow him.

“Oh, my father! my father!” cried Edith, dropping her rein and clasping her hands together, longing to follow, yet unwilling to disobey. “He will be lost—I fear he will be lost!”

“I trust not,” said Lord H——, in a firm, calm tone, well fitted to inspire confidence. “He knows the country well, and can take advantage of every turning to avoid the flame. Besides, if you look along what I imagine to be the course of the stream, you will see a deep undulation, as it were, in that sea of smoke, and when the wind blows strongly it is almost clear. He said, too, that the banks continued free from trees.”

“As far as the bridge and the rapids near our house,” replied Edith; “but after that they are thickly wooded.”

“But the fire has evidently not reached that spot,” said the young nobleman. “All the ground within half a mile

of the house is free at present. I saw it quite distinctly a moment ago, and the wind is setting this way."

"Then can we not follow him?" asked his fair companion, imploringly.

"To what purpose?" asked Lord H——; "and besides," he added, "now let me call to your mind the answer of the good soldier, Corporal Clitherto, just now. He said he must obey orders, and he was right. A soldier to his commander, a child to a parent, a Christian to his God, have, I think, but one duty—to obey. Come, Edith, let us follow the directions we have received. The sun is already beneath the forest edge; we can do no good gazing here; and although I do not think there is any danger, and believe you will be safe under my protection, yet, for many reasons, I could wish to place you beneath the shelter of a roof, and in the society of other women as soon as may be."

"Thank you much," she answered, gazing up into his face, on which the lingering light in the west cast a warm glow. "You remind me of my duty, and strengthen me to follow it. I have no fear of any danger with you to protect me, my lord. It was for my father only I feared. But it was wrong to do so, even for him. God will protect, I do hope and believe. We must take this way, my lord," and with a deep sigh she turned her horse's head upon the path which her father had pointed out.

No general subject of conversation could, of course, be acceptable at that moment; but one topic they had to discuss. And yet Lord H—— made more of that than some men would have made of a thousand. He comforted, he consoled, he raised up hope and expectation. His words were full of promise; and from everything he wrung some illustration to support and cheer.

A few moments after they left the summit of the hill and began the more gentle descent which stretched away to the southeast, the last rays of the sun were withdrawn and night succeeded; but it was the bright and sparkling night of the American sky. There was no moon, indeed,

but the stars burst forth in multitudes over the firmament, larger, more brilliant than they are ever beheld even in the clearest European atmosphere, and they gave light enough to enable the two travelers to see their path. The wind still blew strongly, and carried the smoke away, and the road was wide enough to show the starry canopy overhanging the trees. Obligated to go very slowly, but little progress had been made in an hour, and by that time a strong odor of the burning wood and a pungent feeling in the eyes, showed that some portion of the smoke was reaching them.

"I fear the wind has changed," said Edith. "The smoke seems coming this way."

"The better for your father's house, dear lady," answered Lord H——. "It was a change to the westward he had to fear; the more fully east the better."

They fell into silence again, but in a minute or two after, looking to the left of the road, where the trees were very closely set, though there was an immense mass of brushwood underneath, Lord H—— beheld a small, solitary spot of light, like a lamp burning. It was seen and hidden, seen and hidden again by the trees as they rode on, and must have been at some three or four hundred yards distance. It seemed to change its place, too, to shift, to quiver; and then, in a long, winding line, it crept slowly round and round the boll of a tree like a fiery serpent; and a moment after, with flash and crackling flame, and fitful blaze, it spread flickering over the dry branches of a pitch pine.

"The fire is coming nearer, dear Miss Prevost," said Lord H——, "and it is necessary we should use some forethought. How far, think you, this farmhouse is now?"

"Nearly four miles," answered Edith.

"Does it lie due south?" asked her companion.

"Very nearly," she replied.

"Is there any road to the westward?" demanded the young nobleman, with his eyes still fixed upon the distant flame.

"Yes," she answered; "about half a mile on there is a tolerable path made along the side of the hill on the west, to avoid the swamp during wet weather; but it rejoins this road a mile or so farther on."

"Let us make haste," said Lord H——, abruptly; "the road seems fair enough just here, and I fear there is no time to lose."

He put his hand upon Edith's rein as he spoke, to guide the horse on, and rode forward perhaps somewhat less than a quarter of a mile, watching with an eager eye the increasing light to the east, where it was now seen glimmering through the trees in every direction, looking, through the fretted trellis-work of branches, trunks, and leaves, like a multitude of red lamps hung up in the forest. Suddenly, at a spot where there was an open space or streak, as it was called, running through some two or three hundred yards of the wood, covered densely with brush, but destitute of tall trees, the whole mass of the fire appeared to view, and the travelers seemed gazing into the mouth of a furnace. Just then the wind shifted a little more and blew down the streak; the cloud of smoke rolled forward; flash after flash burst forth along the line as the flame caught the withered leaves on the top of the branches; then the bushes themselves were seized upon by the fire, and sent flaming tongues far up into the air. Onward it rushed, with a roar, and a crackle, and a hiss, caught the taller trees on either side, and poured across the road right in front. Edith's horse, unaccustomed to such a sight, started, and pulled vehemently back; but Lord H——, snatching her riding whip from her hand, struck him sharply on the flank, and forced him forward by the rein. But again the beast resisted; not a moment was to be lost; time wasted in the struggle must have been fatal; and, casting the bridle free, he threw his right arm round her light form, lifted her from the saddle, and seated her safely before him. Then, striking his spurs into the sides of his well-trained charger,

he dashed at full speed through the burning bushes, and in two minutes had gained the ground beyond the fire.

"You are saved, dear Edith!" he said. "You are saved!"

He could not call her Miss Prevost then; and though she heard the name he gave her, at that moment of gratitude and thanksgiving it sounded only sweetly on her ear.

"Thank God! thank God!" said Edith; "and oh, my lord, how can I ever show my gratitude to you?"

Lord H—— was silent for a moment, and then said in a low tone—for it would be spoken: "Dear Edith, I have no claim to gratitude; but if you can give me love instead, the gratitude shall be yours for life. But I am wrong, very wrong, for speaking to you thus at this moment, and in these circumstances. Yet there are emotions which force themselves into words whether we will or not. Forget those I have spoken, and do not tremble so, for they shall be no more repeated till I find a fitter occasion—then they shall immediately. Now, dear Edith, I will ride slowly on with you to this farmhouse, will leave you there with the good people, and, if possible, get somebody to guide me round another way to join your father, and assure him of your safety. That he is safe I feel certain, for this very change of wind must have driven the fire away from him. Would you rather walk? For I am afraid you have an uneasy seat, and we are quite safe now; the flames will go another way."

From many motives Edith preferred to go on foot, and Lord H—— suffered her to slip gently to the ground. Then dismounting himself, he drew her arm within his own, and leading his horse by the bridle, proceeded along the road over the shoulder of the hill, leaving the lower road, which the flame still menaced, on their left. Edith needed support, and their progress was slow, but Lord H—— touched no more upon any subject that could agitate her, and at the end of about an hour and a half they reached the farmhouse, and knocked for admission.

There was no answer, however. No dogs barked, no

sounds were heard, and all was dark within. Lord H—— knocked again. Still all was silent; and putting his hand upon the latch, he opened the door.

"The house seems deserted," he said; and then, raising his voice, he called loudly, to wake any slumbering inhabitant who might be within. Still no answer was returned, and he felt puzzled and more agitated than he would have been in the presence of any real danger. There was no other place of shelter near; he could not leave Edith there, as he had proposed; and yet the thought of passing a long night with her in that deserted house produced a feeling of indecision, checkered by many emotions which were not usual to him.

"This is most unlucky," he said. "What is to be done now?"

"I know not," said Edith, in a low and distressed tone. "I fear, indeed, the good people are gone. If the moon would but rise, we might see what is really in the house."

"I can get a light," replied Lord H——. "There is wood enough scattered about to light a fire. Stay here in the doorway while I fasten my horse and gather some sticks together. I will not go out of sight." The sticks were soon gathered and carried to the large kitchen, into which the door opened directly. Lord H——'s pistol, which he took from the holsters, afforded the means of lighting a cheerful fire on the hearth, and as soon as it blazed up a number of objects were seen in the room which showed that the house had been inhabited lately, and abandoned suddenly. Little of the furniture seemed to have been carried away, indeed; and amongst the first things that were perceived, much to Edith's comfort, were candles and a tin lamp of Dutch manufacture, ready trimmed. These were soon lighted, and Lord H——, taking his fair companion's hand in his, and gazing fondly on her pale and weary face, begged her to seek some repose. "I cannot, of course," he said, "leave you here and seek your father, as I proposed just now; but if you will go upstairs, and seek some room

where you can lock yourself in, in case of danger, I will keep guard here below. Most likely all the people of the house have gone forth to watch the progress of the fire, and may return speedily."

Edith mused, and shook her head, saying: "I think something else must have frightened them away."

"Would you have courage to fire a pistol in case of need?" asked Lord H——, in a low tone. Edith gently inclined her head, and he then added: "Stay! I will charge this for you again."

He then reloaded the pistol, the charge of which he had drawn to light the fire, and was placing it in Edith's hand, when a tall, dark figure glided into the room with a step perfectly noiseless. Lord H—— drew her suddenly back and placed himself before her, but a second glance showed him the dignified form and fine features of Otaitsa's father.

"Peace," said the old chief. "Peace to you, my brother," and he held out his hand to Lord H——, who took it frankly. Black Eagle then unfastened the blue blanket from his shoulders and threw it around Edith, saying: "Thou art my daughter, and art safe. I have heard the voice of the Cataract, and its sound was sweet. It is a great water, and a good. The counsel is wise, my daughter. Go thou up and rest in peace. The Black Eagle will watch by the Cataract till the eyes of morning open in the east. The Black Eagle will watch for thee as for his own young, and thou art safe."

"I know I am, when thou art near me, Father," said Edith, taking his brown hand in hers, "but is it so with all mine?"

"If I can make it so," answered Black Eagle. "Go, daughter, and be at peace. This one at least is safe also, for he is a great chief of our white fathers, and we have a treaty with him. The man of the Five Nations who would lift his hand against him is accursed."

Edith knew that she could extract nothing more from

him, and with her mind somewhat lightened, but not wholly relieved, she ascended to the upper story. Lord H—— seated himself on the step at the foot of the stairs, and the Indian chief crouched down beside him. But both kept a profound silence, and in a few minutes after, the moon, slowly rising over the piece of cleared ground in front, poured in upon their two figures as they sat there side by side, in strange contrast.

CHAPTER IX

THERE is the fate of another connected with the events of that night of whom some notice must be taken, from the influence which his destiny exercised over the destinies of all. With greater promptness and celerity than had been expected from him, even by those who knew him best, Walter Prevost had executed the business entrusted to him, and was ready to set out from Albany a full day at least before his return had been expected by his family. Fortune had favored him, it is true. He had found the commander-in-chief in the city, and at leisure. A man of a prompt and active mind, he had readily appreciated the promptness and activity of the lad, and his business had been dispatched as readily as circumstances permitted.

A boat sailing up the Hudson with some stores and goods for traffic, was found, to carry him a considerable way on his journey; and he was landing at a point on the western bank of the river, some seventeen miles from his father's house, at the very moment that Mr. Prevost, Lord H——, and Edith were mounting by the side of the little lake to pursue their journey. The way before him was rough and uneven, and somewhat intricate, but he thought he knew it sufficiently to make his way by it, before sunset, to a better known part of the country; and he hurried on with youthful confidence and vigor. His rifle in his hand, his knapsack on his shoulder, and a good large hunting knife in his belt, with great agility of limbs and no small portion of bodily vigor, he would have proved no contemptible opponent in the presence of any single enemy. But he never thought of enemies, and all in his bosom was courage, and joy, and expectation.

Whatever great cities, and camps, and courts might have offered, Albany, at least, a small provincial capital, filled with a staid and somewhat rigid people, and only enlivened by the presence of a regiment or two of soldiers, had no attraction for him, and he was heartily glad to escape from it again to the free life around his paternal dwelling, and to the society of his father and Edith—and Otaita. Steadily he went along, climbed the hills, strode along the plain, and forded the river. The traces of cultivation soon became fewer, and then ceased; and following resolutely the path before him, two hours passed before he halted even to look around. Then, however, he paused for a minute or two to consider his onward course. Two or three Indian trails crossed at the spot where he stood, one of them so deeply indented in the ground as to show that its frequent use existed from a very ancient date. Its course seemed to be in the direction which he wanted to go; and he thought he remembered having followed it some months before. Across it ran the settlers' way, broader and better marked out, but not very direct to his father's house; and he was hesitating which he should take when the sound of creaking wheels, and the cry used by ploughmen and teamsters to their cattle, showed him that someone was coming who was likely to give him better information. That information seemed the more necessary as the day was already far on the decline, and he had not yet reached a spot of which he could be certain. A moment or two after, coming up a lane in the wood, as it would be called in England, appeared a heavy ox wagon drawn by four steers, and loaded with three women and a number of boxes, while by the side of the rude vehicle appeared three men on foot and one on horseback, each very well armed, together with no less than five dogs of different descriptions.

Walter instantly recognized in the horseman the good farmer who lived some ten miles to the southwest of his father's house. The farmer was a good-humored, kindly-hearted man, honest enough, but somewhat selfish in his

way, always wishing to have the best of a bargain, if it could be obtained without absolute roguery, yet willing enough to share the fruits of his labor or his cunning with anyone who might be in need.

On the present occasion, however, he was either sullen or stupid, and it was indeed clear that he and his male companions had been drinking quite enough to dull the edge of intellect in some degree. Those on foot went on, without even stopping the oxen to speak with their young neighbor, and the farmer himself only paused for a moment or two to answer Walter's questions.

"Why, Mr. Whittier," said the young gentleman, "you seem to be moving with all your family."

"Ay, ay," answered the farmer, a look of dull cunning coming to his face, "I don't like the look of things. I had a hint. I guess there are other places better than the forest just now—though not so warm, mayhap."

"Why, what is the matter?" asked Walter. "Has anything happened?"

"Oh, no," answered the farmer, looking uncomfortable, and giving his bridle a little sort of jerk, as if he wished to pass on. "The forest's too full of Ingians for my notion; but as you and your father are so fond of them and they of you, there's no harm will come to you, I guess."

His manner was almost uncivil, and Walter moved out of his way without even asking the question he had intended. The man passed on, but suddenly he seemed to think better of the matter, and turning round in the saddle, called out in a voice much louder than necessary, considering the distance between them: "I say, Master Walter, if you're going home, you'd better take that deep trail to the right. I guess it's shorter and safer, and them red devils, or some other vermin, have set fire to the wood on there. It's not much of a thing just yet, but there's no knowing how it will spread. However, if you keep to the west you'll get on. I'm going to more civilized parts for a month or two, seeing I've got all my crops in safe."

As soon as these words were uttered he turned and rode after his wagon, and Walter at once took the Indian trail which the other had mentioned. About half a mile further on he for the first time perceived the smell of smoke, and as soon as he reached the summit of another hill beyond, the whole scene of the conflagration was before his eyes. Between the spot where he stood and his father's house stretched a broad belt of fire and smoke, extending a full mile to the north, farther than he had expected from the vague account of the farmer; and the cloud of brownish vapor had rolled so far up the opposite slope that the lad could neither see the dwelling itself nor distinguish what spot the fire had actually reached.

Ignorant of the absence of Mr. Prevost and Edith, and well aware how rapidly the flame extended when once kindled in a wood, after a long season of dry weather, Walter's heart sank as he gazed. But he lost no time in useless hesitation. The sun was already setting; the distance was still considerable, and he resolved at once to break through the fiery circle if it were possible and reach his home at once. Onward he plunged then, down the side of the hill, and the moment he descended the whole scene was shut out from his sight so completely that but for the strong and increasing smell of burning pine wood, and a feeling of unnatural warmth, he would have had no intimation that a fire was raging close at hand. As he came nearer and nearer, however, a certain rushing sound met his ear, something like that of a heavy gale of wind sweeping the forest, and the smoke became suffocating, while through the branches and stems of the trees a red light shone, especially toward the south and west, showing where the fire raged with the greatest fierceness.

Breathing thick and fast, he hurried on, lighted by the flames alone, for the sun had sunk by this time, and the dense cloud of smoke which hung over this part of the wood shut out every star, till at length he reached the very verge of the conflagration. Some hundreds of acres lay before

him, with trees, some fallen one over the other, some still standing, but deprived of foliage, masses of brushwood and long trailing vines, all glowing with intense heat. He felt that to proceed in that direction was death. He could hardly draw his breath; his face felt scorched and burning, and yet the drops of perspiration rolled heavily from his forehead.

Retreating a little to escape the heat, he turned his steps northward; but by that time he had lost the trail, and he was forcing his way through the brushwood, encumbered by his rifle and knapsack, when suddenly, by the light of the fire shining through the trees, he saw a dark figure, some twenty or thirty yards before him, waving to him eagerly, and apparently calling to him, also. The roar and crackling of the burning wood was too loud for any other sounds to be heard, but the gestures of the figure seemed to direct him toward the south again, and obeying the signs, he soon found himself once more upon an Indian trail. The next instant the figure he had seen was upon the same path, and a little nearer; but it was that of an Indian, and in the smoky light Walter Prevost could not distinguish his tribe or nation. He advanced cautiously then, with his thumb upon the cock of the rifle; but as soon as he was within hearing the man called to him in the Oneida tongue, and in a friendly tone telling him to follow, and warning him that death lay to the westward.

Thrown off his guard by such signs of interest, the lad advanced with a quick step, and was soon close to his guide, though the man walked fast.

"Is the house burnt, brother?" asked the youth, eagerly.

"What, the lodge of the paleface?" said the Indian.

"No; it stands fast."

"Thank God for that!" said Walter Prevost, in English; but the words had hardly passed his lips when he suddenly felt his arms seized from behind, his rifle was wrested from his hands, and he himself cast backward on the ground.

Two savage faces glared above him, and he expected to see the gleam of the deadly tomahawk the next instant.

"What now!" he exclaimed in Oneida. "Am I not your brother? Am I not the son of the Black Eagle, and a friend of the children of the Stone?"

There was no answer, but in dead silence the Indians proceeded with rapid hands to bind his arms with thongs of deerskin, and then, raising him on his feet, forced him to retrace his steps along the very trail which had brought him thither.

CHAPTER X

DAY broke slowly and heavily under a gray cloud, and found Lord H—— and the Indian chief still seated side by side at the entrance of the farmhouse. A word or two had passed between them in the earlier part of the night, but for many hours before dawn they had remained perfectly silent. Only once through the hours of their watch had Black Eagle moved from his seat, and that was nearly at midnight. The ears of Lord H—— had been on the watch as well as his own; but though the young English nobleman heard no sound, the chief caught a distant footfall about a quarter before twelve, and starting up he listened attentively. Then, moving slowly toward the door, he stood there a few moments as still as a statue. Presently Lord H—— caught the sound which had moved him, though it was exceedingly light, and the next instant another dark figure, not quite so tall as that of the chief, darkened the moonlight, and threw its shadow into the doorway. A few words then passed between the two Indians, in their native tongue, at first low and musical in tone, but then rising high, in accents which seemed to the ear of the listener to express grief or anger. Not more than five sentences were spoken on either part, and then the last comer bounded away, with a quick and seemingly reckless step, into the forest, and the old chief returned and seated himself, assuming exactly the same attitude as before.

When day dawned, however, Black Eagle rose and said in English: "It is day, my brother; let the voice of the Cataract awake the maiden, and I will lead you on the way. Her horse has not yet come, but if it have not run with the wind, or fed upon the fire, it will be here speedily."

"Do you know, then, what became of it after it broke away from us?" asked Lord H——.

"Nay," answered the Indian, "I know not; but my steps were in yours from the setting sun till you came hither. I was there for your safety, my brother, and for the safety of the maiden."

"We should often have been glad of your advice," answered Lord H——, "for we were often in sore need of some better information than our own."

"The man who aids himself needs no aid," answered Black Eagle. "Thou wert sufficient for the need; why should I take from thee thy right to act?"

As they were speaking, the light step of Edith was heard upon the stairs, and the eyes of the Black Eagle fixed upon her as she descended, with a look which seemed to Lord H—— to have some significance, though he could not tell exactly in what the peculiarity consisted. It was calm and grave, but there was a sort of tenderness in it which, without knowing why, made the young nobleman fear that the Indian was aware of some evil having befallen Mr. Prevost.

His mind was soon relieved, however, for when Edith had descended, the chief said at once: "Thy father is safe, my daughter. He passed through the fire uninjured, and is in his own lodge."

Edith looked pale and worn, but the words of the chief called a joyful smile upon her face, and the color back upon her cheek. In answer to the inquiries of Lord H—— she admitted that she had slept hardly at all, and added, with a returning look of anxiety: "How could I sleep, so uncertain as I was of my father's safety?"

She expressed an anxious desire to go forward as soon as possible and not to wait for the chance of her horse being caught by the Indians, which she readily comprehended as the meaning of the Black Eagle, when his somewhat ambiguous words were reported to her.

"They may catch him," she said, "or they may not, and

my father will be very anxious, I know, till he sees me. I can walk quite well."

The Indian was standing silently at the door, to which he had turned after informing her of her father's safety, and Lord H——, taking her hand, inquired in a low tone if she would be afraid to stay alone with the Black Eagle for a few moments while he sought for some food for herself and him.

"Not in the least," she answered. "After his words last night, and the throwing of his blanket upon me, I am as safe with him as Otaita would be. From that moment he looked upon me as his daughter, and would treat me as such in any emergency."

"Well, then, I will not be long," answered Lord H——, and passing the Indian, he said: "I leave her to your care for a few moments, Black Eagle."

The Indian answered only by a sort of guttural sound peculiar to his people, and then, turning back into the house, he seated himself on the ground as before, and seemed inclined to remain in silence, but there were doubts in Edith's mind which she wished to have solved, and she said: "Is not my father thy brother, Black Eagle?"

"He is my brother," answered the Indian, laconically, and relapsed into silence again.

"Will a great chief suffer any harm to happen to his brother?" asked Edith again, after considering for a few moments how to shape her question.

"No warrior of the Totem of the Tortoise dares raise a tomahawk against the brother of the Black Eagle," answered the chief.

"But is he not the great chief of the Oneidas?" said Edith again. "Do not the people of the Stone hear his voice? Is he not to them as the rock on which their house is founded? Whither in the sky could the Oneidas soar if the Black Eagle led them not? And shall they disobey his voice?"

"The people of the Stone have their laws," replied the

chief, "which are thongs of leather, to bind each sachem, and each totem, and each warrior; they were whispered into the rolls of wampum, which is in the hands of the great medicine man, or priest, as you would call him, and the voice of the Black Eagle, though it be strong in war, is as the song of the bobolink when compared to the voice of the laws."

Short as this conversation may seem when written down, it had occupied several minutes, for the Indian had made long pauses, and Edith, willing to humor him by adopting the custom of his people, had followed his example. His last reply was hardly given when Lord H—— returned, carrying a dry and somewhat hard loaf and a jug of clear cold water.

"I have not been very successful, for the people have evidently abandoned the place, and all their cupboards but one are locked up. In that, however, I found this loaf."

"They are squirrels, who fly along the boughs at the sound of danger, and leave their stores hidden," said the Black Eagle; "but dip the bread in water, my daughter; it will give you strength by the way."

Lord H—— laid the loaf down upon the table and hurried out of the room again; but Edith had little opportunity of questioning her dusky companion further before the young nobleman returned. He was absent hardly two minutes, and when he came back he led his horse behind him, somewhat differently accoutred from the preceding day. The demi-pique was now covered with a pillow, firmly strapped on with some leathern thongs, which he had found in the house, thus forming it into a sort of pad; and the two stirrups brought to one side, stretched as far apart as possible, and somewhat shortened, were kept extended by a piece of plank passed through the irons, and firmly attached, thus forming a complete rest for the feet of anyone sitting sidewise on the horse. Lord H—— had done many a thing in life on which he might reasonably pride himself. He had resisted temptations to which most men would have

yielded; he had done many a gallant and noble deed; he had displayed great powers of mind and high qualities of heart in terrible emergencies and moments of great difficulty; but it may be questioned whether he had looked so complacently on any act of his whole life as on the rapid and successful alteration of his own inconvenient saddle into a comfortable lady's pad; and when he brought out Edith to the door, and she saw how he had been engaged, she could not help rewarding him with a beaming smile, in which amusement had a less share than gratitude. Even over the dark countenance of the Indian, trained to stoical apathy, something flitted not unlike a smile, also. The young nobleman, lifting his fair charge in his arms, seated her lightly on the horse's back, adjusted the rest for her feet with care, and then took the bridle to lead her on the way.

The Indian chief, without a word, walked on before, at a pace with which the horse's swiftest walk could scarcely keep up, and crossing the cleared ground around the house, they were soon once more beneath the branches of the forest. More than once the Black Eagle had to pause and lean upon his rifle, waiting for his two companions; but doubtless it was the difficulties of the narrow path, never made for horse's hoofs, and not the desire of prolonging conversation, nor the pleasure of gazing up the while into a pair of as beautiful eyes as ever shone upon mortal man, or into a face which might have looked out of heaven and not have shamed the sky, that retarded the young nobleman on his way.

Two miles were at length accomplished, and then they came into the solitary high road again, which led within a short distance of Mr. Prevost's cottage. During the whole journey the Indian chief had not uttered a word; but as soon as he had issued forth from the narrow path into the more open road he paused and waited till Edith came up; then, pointing with his hand, he said: "Thou knowest the way, my daughter; thou hast no more need

of me. The Black Eagle must wing his way back to his own rock."

"But shall we be safe?" asked Edith.

"As in the happy hunting grounds," replied the chief; and then, turning away, he retraced the trail by which they had come.

Their pace was not much quicker than it had been in the more difficult path. The seal seemed to be taken away from Lord H——'s lips. He felt that Edith was safe, nearer home, no longer left, completely left, to his mercy and his delicacy, and his words were tender and full of strong affection; but she laid her hand gently on his as it rested on the peak of the saddle, and with a face glowing as if the leaves of autumn maples had cast a reflection from their crimson hues upon it, she said: "Oh, not now—not now—spare me a little still."

He gazed up in her face with a look of earnest inquiry, but he saw something there in the half-veiled, swimming eyes, or in the glowing cheek, or in the agitated quivering of the lip, which was enough to satisfy him.

"Forgive me," he said, in a deprecatory tone, but then the moment after he added, with frank, soldierly boldness: "But, dear Edith, I may thank you now, and thank you with my whole heart, for I am not a confident fool, and you are no light coquette, and did you refuse, you would say more."

Edith bent her head almost to the saddlebow, and some bright drops rolled over her cheek.

They remained silent, both conversing with their own thoughts for a short time, and then they were roused from somewhat agitated reveries by a loud and joyous call, and looking up the ascent before them they saw Mr. Prevost on horseback, and two of the negro slaves on foot, coming down as if to meet them. They hurried on fast; father and daughter sprang to the ground, and oh, with what joy she felt herself in his arms.

It is unnecessary to give here the explanations that

ensued. Mr. Prevost had little to tell; he had passed safely—though not without scorching his clothes and face, and no small danger—along the course of the stream and through a small part of the thicker wood. He had found his house and all the buildings safe, and even the forest immediately around still free from the fire, and out of danger as long as the wind remained easterly. Satisfied that his daughter would find the farmer's family, and be kindly entertained, he had no anxiety on her account till about an hour before, when her horse had come back to the house with the saddle and housings scorched and blackened, and the hoofs nearly burnt off his feet. The poor animal could give no history, and Mr. Prevost, in great alarm for Edith, had set out to seek her in haste.

Her tale was soon told, and again and again Mr. Prevost shook her protector's hand, thanking him earnestly for what he had done for his child. The distance to the house was now not great, and giving the horses to the negroes, the little party proceeded on foot, talking over the events of the last few hours. When they reached the house there were somewhat obstreperous sounds of joy from the women servants to see their young mistress return, and Edith was speedily carried away to her chamber for rest and refreshment. Breakfast was immediately prepared in the hall for Lord H——, who had tasted no food since the middle of the preceding day; but he ate little even now, and there was a sort of restlessness about him which Mr. Prevost remarked with some anxiety.

"My lord, you hardly taste your food," he said, "and seem not well or not at ease. I trust you have no subject of grief or apprehension pressing upon your mind."

"None whatever," replied Lord H——, with a smile; "but to tell you the truth, my dear sir, I am impatient for a few moments' conversation with you alone, and I could well have spared my breakfast till they are over. Pray let us go into the other room, where we shall not be interrupted."

Mr. Prevost led the way, and closed the door after them with a grave face, for, as is usual in such cases, he had not the faintest idea of what was coming.

"Our acquaintance has been very short, Mr. Prevost," said Lord H——, as soon as they were seated, feeling, indeed, more hesitation and embarrassment than he had imagined he could experience in such circumstances. "But I trust you have seen enough of me, taken together with general repute, to make what I am going to say not very presumptuous."

Mr. Prevost gazed at him in perfect astonishment, unable to perceive where his speech would end. And as the young nobleman paused he answered: "Pray speak on, my lord. Believe me, I have the highest esteem and regard for you; your character and conduct through life have, I well know, added luster to your rank, and your noble blood has justified itself in your noble actions. What on earth can you have to say which could make me think you presumptuous for a moment?"

"Simply this, and perhaps you *may* think me presumptuous when I have said it," replied Lord H——. "I am going to ask you to give me something which I value very much, and which you rightly value as much at least as anything you possess. I mean your daughter. Nay, do not start and turn so pale. I know all the importance of what I ask, but I have now passed many days entirely in her society; I have gone through some difficulties and dangers with her, as you know—scenes and sensations which endear two persons to each other. I have been much in woman's society. I have known the bright and the beautiful in many lands; perhaps my expectations have been too great, my wishes too exacting, but I never met woman hitherto who touched my heart. I have now found the only one whom I can love, and I now ask her of you with a full consciousness of what it is I ask."

Mr. Prevost had remained profoundly silent, with his eyes bent down, and his cheeks, as Lord H—— had said,

very pale. There was a great struggle in his heart, as there must be always in a parent's bosom in such circumstances.

"She is very young—so very young!" he murmured, speaking to himself rather than to his companion.

"I may, indeed, be somewhat too old for her," said Lord H——, thoughtfully, "but yet I trust, in heart and spirit at least, Mr. Prevost, I have still all the freshness of youth about me."

"Oh, it is not that—it is not that at all," answered Edith's father; "it is that she is so very young to take upon herself both cares and duties. True, she is no ordinary girl; and perhaps if ever anyone were fit, at so early an age, for the great responsibilities of such a state, it is Edith. Her education has been singular, unlike that of any other girl——"

He had wandered away, as was his custom, from the immediate question to collateral issues, and was no longer considering whether he should give his consent to Edith's marriage with Lord H——, but whether she was fit for the marriage state at all, and what effect the education she had received would have on her conduct as a wife.

The lover, in the meantime, habitually attaching himself and every thought to one important object, was impatient for something more definite, and he ventured to break across Mr. Prevost's spoken reverie, saying: "Our marriage would be necessarily delayed, Mr. Prevost, for some time, even if I obtained your consent. May I hope that it will be granted me if no personal objection exists toward myself?"

"None in the world!" exclaimed Mr. Prevost, eagerly. "You cannot suppose it for a moment, my dear lord. All I can say is, that I will oppose nothing which Edith calmly and deliberately thinks is for her own happiness. What does she say herself?"

"She says nothing," answered Lord H——, with a smile; "for though she cannot doubt what are my feelings toward her, she has not been put to the trial of giving any answer

without your expressed approbation. May I believe, then, that I have your permission to offer her my hand?"

"Beyond a doubt," replied Mr. Prevost. "Let me call her; her answer will soon be given, for she is not one to trifle with anybody."

He rose as he spoke, as if to quit the room, but Lord H—— stopped him, saying: "Not yet, not yet, my dear sir. She had little, if any, rest last night, and has experienced much fatigue and anxiety during the last twenty-four hours; probably she is taking some repose, and I must not allow even a lover's impatience to deprive her of that."

"I had forgotten," said Mr. Prevost. "It is indeed true; the dear child must, indeed, need some repose. It is strange, my lord, how sorrows and joys blend themselves together in all events of mortal life. I had thought, when in years long ago I entwined my fingers in the glossy curls of my Edith's hair, and looking through the liquid crystal of her eyes, seemed to see into the deep foundations of pure emotions in her young heart—I had thought, I say, that few joys would be equal to that of seeing her, at some future day, bestow her hand on some man worthy of her, to make and partake the happiness of a cheerful home; but now I find the thought has its bitter as well as its sweet; and memories of the chilly grave rise up to call a solemn and sobered shade over the bright picture drawn."

His tone dropped gradually as he spoke, and fixing his eyes upon the ground, he again fell into a fit of absent thought, which lasted long.

Lord H—— would not disturb his reverie, and walking quietly out of the room, he gave himself also up to meditation. But his reflective moods were of a different kind from those of his friend—more eager, more active—and they required some employment for the limbs while the mind was so busy. To and fro he walked before the house for nearly an hour, before Mr. Prevost came forth and

found him; and then the walk was still continued. But the father's thoughts, though they had wandered for a while, had soon returned to his daughter, and their conversation was of Edith only.

At length, when it was nearly noon, as they turned upon the little open space of ground in front of the dwelling, the eyes of the young nobleman, which had been turned more than once to the door, rested on Edith as she stood in the hall and gazed forth over the prospect.

"The fire seems to be raging there still," she said, pointing with her fair hand over the country toward the southwest, where hung a dense canopy of smoke above the forest. "What a blessing one of our autumnal rains would be!"

Lord H—— made no reply, but suddenly left her father's side, and taking her extended hand in his, led her into the little sitting-room. They remained long enough together—to Mr. Prevost it seemed very long—but when the lover led her to the door again there were once more happy tears in her eyes, glad blushes on her cheek; and though the strong, manly arm was fondly thrown around her waist, she escaped from its warm clasp and cast herself upon the bosom of her father.

"She is mine!" said Lord H——. "She is mine!"

"But none the less mine," answered Mr. Prevost, kissing her cheek.

"Ah, no," said Edith. "No! always yours, my dear father—your child;" and then she added, while the glowing blood rushed over her beautiful face like the gush of morning over a white cloud: "Your child, though his wife."

It cost her an effort to utter the word wife, and yet she was pleased to speak it; but then the moment after, as if to hide it from memory again, she said: "Oh, that dear Walter were here. He would be very happy, I know, and say I had come to the end of my day-dreaming."

"He will be here probably to-night," said her lover.

"We must not count upon it," said her father; "he may

meet many things to detain him; and now, my children, I will go in and make up my journal till the dinner hour."

Edith leaned fondly on his bosom, and whispered: "And write that this has been one happy day, my father."

The day went by; night fell, and Walter Prevost did not appear in his father's house. No alarm, however, was entertained, for out of the wide range of chances there were many events which might have occurred to detain him. A shade of anxiety, perhaps, came over Edith's mind; but it passed away the next morning, when she heard from the negro Chaudo (or Alexander), who, having been brought up among the Indians from his infancy, was better acquainted with their habits than any person in the house, that there had not been a single one in the neighborhood since the preceding morning at eight o'clock.

"All gone west, Missy," he said; "the last to go were old Chief Black Eagle. I hear ob him coming to help you, and I go out to see."

Edith asked no questions in regard to the sources of his information, for he was famous for finding out all that was going on in the neighborhood, and with a childlike vanity making somewhat of a secret of the means by which he obtained intelligence; but she argued, reasonably, though wrongly, that as Walter was not to set out from Albany

Thus passed the morning till about three o'clock; but till about the same hour the Indians departed, he could not have fallen in with any of their parties.

then, when the lad did not appear, anxiety rose up and became strong, as hour after hour went by and he came not. Each tried to sustain the hopes of the others; each argued against the apprehensions he himself entertained. Lord H—— pointed out that the commander-in-chief, to whom Walter had been sent, might be absent from Albany. Mr. Prevost suggested that the young man might have found no boat coming up the river; and Edith remembered that very often the boatmen were frightfully exorbitant in their charge for bringing anyone on the way who seemed

eager to proceed. Knowing her brother's character well, she thought it very likely that he would resist an attempt at imposition, even at the risk of delay. But still she was very, very anxious, and as night again fell, and the hour of repose arrived without his presence, tears gathered in her beautiful eyes and trembled on the silken lashes.

The following morning dawned in heavy rain. A perfect deluge seemed descending from the sky, but still Lord H—— ordered his horse at an early hour, telling Edith and Mr. Prevost in as quiet and easy a tone as he could assume, that he was going to Albany.

"Although I trust and believe," he said, "that my young friend Walter has been detained by some accidental circumstances, yet it will be satisfactory to us all to know what has become of him; and, moreover, it is absolutely necessary that I should have some communication as speedily as possible with the commander-in-chief. I think it likely that Walter may have followed him down the river, as he knows my anxiety for an immediate answer. I must do so, too, if I find him still absent; but you shall hear from me when I reach Albany, and I will be back myself as soon as possible."

Edith gazed at him with a melancholy look, for she felt how much she needed, and how much more she still might need, the comfort of his presence; but she would not say a word to prevent his going. The breakfast that day was a sad and a gloomy meal. The lowering sky, the pouring rain, the thoughts that were in the hearts of all, banished everything like cheerfulness. Various orders were given, for one of the servants to be ready to guide Lord H—— on his way, for ascertaining whether the little river was in flood, and other matters; and the course which Walter was likely to take on his return was considered and discussed, in order that the young nobleman might take the same road, and meet him, if possible; but this was the only conversation that took place.

Just as they were about to rise from table, however, a

bustle was heard without, amongst the servants, and Mr. Prevost started up, exclaiming: "Here he is, I do believe!"

But the hope was dispelled the next instant, for a young man in full military costume, but drenched with rain, was ushered into the room, and advanced toward Lord H——, saying in a quiet, commonplace tone: "We arrived last night, my lord, and I thought it better to come up and report myself immediately, as the quarters are very insufficient, and we may expect a great deal of stormy weather, I am told."

Lord H—— looked at him gravely, as if he expected to hear something more, and then replied, after a moment's pause: "I do not exactly understand you, Captain Hammond; you have arrived where?"

"Why, at the boatmen's village, on the points, my lord," replied the young officer, with a look of some surprise; "have you not received Lord Loudon's dispatch in answer to your lordship's own letters?"

"No, sir," replied Lord H——; "but you had better come and confer with me in another room."

"Oh, George, let us hear all!" exclaimed Edith, laying her hand upon his arm, and divining his motives at once. "If there be no professional reason for secrecy, let us hear all."

"Well," said Lord H——, gravely, "pray, Captain Hammond, when were his lordship's letters dispatched, and by whom?"

"By the young gentleman you sent, my lord," replied Captain Hammond; "and he left Albany two days ago, early in the morning. He was a fine, gentlemanly young fellow, who won us all; and I went down to the boat with him myself."

Edith turned very pale, and Mr. Prevost inquired: "Pray, has anything been heard of the boat since?"

"Yes, sir," answered the young officer, beginning to perceive the state of the case. "She returned to Albany the

same night, and we came up in her yesterday, as far as we could. I made no inquiries after young Mr. Prevost, for I took it for granted he had arrived with the dispatches."

Lord H—— turned his eyes toward the face of Edith, and saw quite sufficient there to make him instantly draw a chair toward her and seat her in it.

"Do not give way to apprehension," he said, "before we know more. The case is strange, undoubtedly, dear Edith, but still the enigma may be solved in a happier way than you think."

Edith shook her head sadly, saying in a low tone: "You do not know all, dear George—at least I believe not. The Indians have received offence—they never forgive. They were wandering about here on the night we were caught by the fire, disappearing the next morning; and some time during that night my poor brother must have been——"

Tears broke off the sentence; but her lover eagerly caught at some of her words to find some ground of hope for her—whatever he might fear himself. "He may have been turned from his course by the burning forest," he said, "and have found a difficulty in retracing his way. The woods were still burning yesterday, and we cannot tell how far the fire may have extended. At all events, dearest Edith, we have gained some information to guide us. We can now trace poor Walter to the place where he disembarked, and that will narrow the ground we have to search. Take courage, love, and let us all trust in God."

"He says that Walter intended to disembark four miles south of the King's road," said Mr. Prevost, who had been talking earnestly to Captain Hammond. "Let us set out at once and examine the ground between this place and that."

"I think not," said Lord H——, after a moment's thought. "I will ride down as fast as possible to the post, and gain what information I can there. Then, spreading a body of men to the westward, we will sweep all the trails up to this spot. You and as many of your people as can

be spared from the house may come on to meet us, setting out in an hour; but for heaven's sake, do not leave this dear girl alone!"

"I fear not—I fear not for myself!" replied Edith. "Only seek for Walter, obtain some news of him, and let us try to save him, if there be yet time to do so."

Covering her eyes with her handkerchief, which was sometimes wetted with her tears, Edith took no more part in what was going on, but gave herself up to bitter thought, and many and complex were the trains which it followed.

While Edith remained plunged in these gloomy reveries, an active, but not less sad, consultation was going on at the other side of the room, which ended in the adoption of the plan proposed by Lord H——, very slightly modified by the suggestions of Mr. Prevost. An orderly whom Captain Hammond had brought with him was left at the house as a sort of guard for Edith, it being believed that the sight of his red coat would act as a sort of intimation to any Indians who might be in the woods that the family was under the protection of the British government. Lord H—— and the young officer set out together for the boatmen's village—whence Walter had departed for Albany, and where a small party of English soldiers were now posted—intending to obtain all the aid they could, and sweep along the forest till they came to the verge of the recent fire, leaving sentinels on the different trails, which, the reader must understand, were so numerous throughout the whole of what the Iroquois called their Long House, as often to be within hail of each other.

Advancing stealthily along these narrow pathways, Lord H—— calculated that he could reconnoitre the whole distance between the great river and the fire with sufficient closeness to prevent any numerous party of Indians passing unseen, at least till he met with the advancing party of Mr. Prevost, who were to search the country thoroughly for some distance round the house, and then to proceed

steadily forward in a reverse course to that of the young nobleman and his men.

No time was lost by Lord H—— and Captain Hammond on the road, the path they took being for a considerable distance the same by which Lord H—— had first arrived at Mr. Prevost's home, and throughout its whole length the same which the young officer had followed in the morning. It was somewhat longer, it is true, than the Indian trail by which Woodchuck had led them on his expedition; but its width and better construction more than made up for the difference in distance; and the rain had not been falling long enough to affect its solidity to any great extent. Thus little more than an hour and a half sufficed to bring the two officers to the spot where a company of Lord H——'s regiment was posted; and the first task, that of seeking some intelligence of Walter's movements after landing, was more successful than might have been expected.

A settler, who supplied the boatmen with meal and flour, was even then in the village, and he averred truly that he had seen young Mr. Prevost, and spoken with him, just as he was quitting the cultivated ground on the bank of the river, and entering the forest ground beyond. Thus his course was traced up to a quarter before three o'clock on the Thursday preceding, and to the entrance of a government road which all the boatmen knew well. The distance between that spot and Mr. Prevost's house was about fourteen miles, and from the boatmen's village to the mouth of the road, through the forest, some six or seven. Besides the company of soldiers, numbering some seventy-three or seventy-four men, there were at least forty or fifty stout, able-bodied fellows amongst the boatmen well acquainted with all the intricacies of the roads round about, and fearless and daring from the constant perils and exertions of their mode of life.

These were soon gathered round Lord H——, whose rank and military station they now learned for the first time;

and he found that the tidings of the disappearance of Walter Prevost, whom most of them knew and loved, excited a spirit in them which he had little expected. He addressed a few words to them at once, offering a considerable reward to each man who would join in searching thoroughly the whole of that part of the forest which lay between the spot where the young man was last seen and his father's house. But one tall, stout man, of about forty, stepped forward and spoke for the rest, saying: "We want no reward for such work as that, my lord. I guess there's not a man of us who will not turn out to search for young Walter Prevost, if you'll but leave redcoats enough with the old men to protect our wives and children in case of need."

"More than sufficient will remain," replied Lord H——; "I cannot venture for anything not exactly connected with the service, to weaken the post by more than one-quarter of its number; but still we shall make up a sufficient party to search the woods sufficiently, if you will all go with me."

"That we will! that we will!" exclaimed a dozen voices; and everything was soon arranged. Signals and modes of communication and co-operation were speedily agreed upon; and the practical knowledge of the boatmen proved fully as serviceable as the military science of Lord H——. He was far too wise not to avail himself of it to the fullest extent; and soon, with some twenty regular soldiers, and thirty-seven or thirty-eight men from the village, each armed with his invariable rifle and hatchet, and a number of good, big, active boys, who volunteered to act as a sort of runners and keep up the communication between the different parts of the line, he set out upon his way along the edge of the forest, and reached the end of the government road, near which Walter had been last seen, about one o'clock in the day.

Here the men dispersed, the soldiers guided by the boatmen; and the forest was entered at some fourteen different places, wherever an old or a new trail could be discovered.

Whenever an opportunity presented itself by the absence of brushwood, or the old trees being wide or far apart, the boys ran across from one party to another, carrying information or directions; and though each little group was often hidden from the other as they advanced steadily onward, still it rarely happened that many minutes elapsed without their catching a sight of some friendly party on the right or left; while whoop and halloo marked their progress to each other. Once or twice the trails crossing, brought two parties to the same spot; but then, separating again, immediately, they sought each a new path, and proceeded as before.

Few traces of any kind could be discovered on the ground, for the rain, though it had now ceased, had so completely washed the face of the earth that every print of shoe or moccasin was obliterated. The tracks of cart wheels, indeed, seemingly recent, and the foot marks of a horse and some oxen, were discovered along the government road, but nothing more, till, at a spot where a large and deeply indented trail left the highway, the ground appeared a good deal trampled by hoof marks, as if a horse had been standing there some little time; and, under a thick hemlock tree at the corner of the trail, sheltering the ground beneath from the rain, the print of a well-made shoe was visible. The step had evidently been turned in the direction of Mr. Prevost's house, and up that trail Lord H—— himself proceeded, with a soldier and two boatmen.

No further step could be traced, however; but the boatman who had been the spokesman a little while before, insisted upon it that they must be on young Master Walter's track. "That's a New York shoe," he said, "made that print, I am sure; and depend upon it, we are right where he went. Keep a sharp look under all the thick trees at the side, my lord. You may catch another track. Keep behind, boys—you'll brush 'em out."

Nothing more was found, however, though the man afterward thought he had discovered the print of a moccasin

in the sand, where it had been partly protected; but still some rain had reached it, and there was no certainty.

The trail they were then following was, I have said, large and deeply worn, so that the little party of Lord H—— soon got somewhat in advance of all the others, except that which had continued on the government road.

"Stay a bit, my lord," said the good boatman, at length; "we are too far ahead, and might chance to get a shot, if there be any of them red devils in the wood. I know them well, and all their ways, I guess, having been among them, man and boy, these thirty years; and it was much worse when I first came. They'll lie as close to you as that bush, and the first thing you'll know of it will be a ball whizzing into you; but if we all go on in time they can't keep back, but will creep away like mice. But what I can't understand is, why they should try to hurt young Walter, for they were all as fond of him as if he were one of themselves."

"The fact is, my good friend," replied Lord H——, in a low tone, "the day I came down to your landing last, one of the Oneidas was, unfortunately, killed, and we are told that they will have some white man's blood in retaliation."

"To be sure they will!" said the man, with a look of consternation. "They'll have blood for blood, if all of 'em die for it. But did Walter kill him?"

"No," replied Lord H——; "it was our friend the Woodchuck—but he did it entirely in self-defence."

"What! Brooks?" exclaimed the boatman, in much surprise. "Do let's hear about it, and I guess I can tell you how it will all go, better than any other man between this and Boston;" and he seated himself on the stump of a tree, in an attitude of attention.

Very briefly, but with perfect clearness, Lord H—— related all that had occurred on the occasion referred to. The boatman listened with evident anxiety, and then sat for

a moment in silence, with the air of a judge pondering over the merits of a case just pleaded before him.

"I'll tell you how it is, my lord," he said, at length, in an oracular tone; "they've got him, depend on't. They've caught him here in the forest; but you see, they'll not kill him yet—no, no, they won't. They've heard that Woodchuck has got away, and they've kidnapped young Walter to make sure of someone. But they'll stay to see if they can't get Brooks into their clutches somehow. They'll go dodgering about all manner of ways, and try every trick you can think of to have him back. Very like you may hear that they've killed the lad, but don't you believe it for a good many months to come, for I guess it's likely they'll set this story afloat just to get Brooks to come back, for then he'll think that they've had all they wanted, and will know that he's safe from all but the father, or the brother, or the son of the man he has killed. But they'll wait and see. Oh, they're the most cunnin'est set of critters that ever lived, and no doubt of it. But let's get on, for the others are up—there's a redcoat through the trees here—and they may, perhaps, have scalped the boy; though I don't think it's nohow likely."

Thus saying, he rose and led the way again through the dark glades of the wood, till the clearer light of day shining amidst the trunks and branches on before, showed that the party was approaching the spot where the late conflagration had laid the shady monarchs of the forest low. Suddenly, at a spot where another trail crossed, the soldier who was with them stooped down and picked something up off the ground, saying: "Here's a good large knife, anyhow."

"Let me see—let me see!" cried the boatman. "That's his knife, for a score of dollars! Aye—'Warner, London'—that's the maker. It's his knife. But that shows nothing. He might have dropped it. But he's come precious near the fire. He surely would never try to break through and get himself burnt to death. If the Ingians had got him, I should have thought they'd have caught him farther back.

Hallo! What are they all doing on there? They've found the corpse, I guess."

The eyes of Lord H—— were bent forward in the same direction, and though his lips uttered no sound, his mind had asked the same question and come to the same conclusion. Three negroes were standing gathered together round some object lying on the ground, and the figure of Mr. Prevost himself, partly seen, partly hidden by the slaves, appeared, sitting on a fallen tree, with his head resting on his hand, contemplating fixedly the same object which seemed to engage all the attention of the negroes.

Lord H—— hurried his pace and reached the spot in a few moments. He was somewhat relieved by what he saw when he came nearer, for the object at which Mr. Prevost was gazing at so earnestly was Walter's knapsack, and not the dead body of his son. The straps which had fastened it to the lad's shoulders had been cut, not unbuckled, and it was, therefore, clear that it was not by his own voluntary act that it had been cast off; but it did not appear to have been opened, and the boatman, looking down at it, muttered: "No, no, they would not steal anything—not they. That was not what they wanted. It's no use looking any farther. The case is clear enough."

"Too clear!" said Mr. Prevost, in a dull, stern tone. "That man Brooks has saved his own life and sacrificed my poor boy!"

The tears gushed into his eyes as he spoke, and he turned away to hide them. Lord H—— motioned to the negroes to take up the knapsack and carry it home, and then, advancing to Mr. Prevost's side, he took his hand, saying in a low tone: "There may yet be hope, my dear sir. Let us not give way to despair, but exert ourselves instantly and strenuously to trace out the poor lad and save him. Much may yet be done—the government may interfere—he may be rescued by a sudden effort."

Mr. Prevost shook his head heavily, and murmuring,

"Are all my family destined to perish by Indians?" took his way slowly back toward his house.

Nothing more was said till he was within a quarter of a mile of his own door, but there, just emerging from the cover of the wood, the unhappy father stopped and took the hand of Lord H——. "Break it to her gently," he said, in a low tone; "I am unfit. Misfortunes, disappointments and sorrows have broken the spirit which was once strong, and cast down the energies which used never to fail. It is in such moments as these that I feel how much I am weakened. Prepare her to leave this place, too. My pleasant solitude has become abhorrent to me, and I cannot live here without a dread and memory always upon me. Go forward, my good lord. I will follow you soon."

CHAPTER XI

WITH great pain Lord H—— contemplated the task before him; but his was a firm and resolute heart, and he strode forward quickly, to accomplish it as soon as possible. Fancy painted, as he went, all the grief and anguish he was about to inflict upon Edith; but fancy hardly did her justice, for it kept out of the picture many of the stronger and finer traits of her character. The beautiful girl was watching from the window, and at once recognized her lover as he issued from the wood alone. Her heart sank with apprehension, it is true, but nevertheless she ran out along the little path to meet him, in order to know the worst at once. Before they met, slowly and heavily her father came forth from the wood, with a crowd of boatmen and soldiers following, in groups of six or seven at a time; and with wonderful accuracy, she divined the greater part of what had occurred. She instantly stopped till Lord H—— came up, and then inquired in a low and trembling voice: "Have you found him? Is he dead or living?"

"We have not found him, dear Edith," said Lord H——, taking her hand and leading her toward the house, "but your father conceives there is great cause for apprehension of the very worst kind, from what we have found. I trust, however, that his fears go beyond the reality, and that there is still——"

"Oh, dear George, do not keep me in suspense!" said Edith. "Let me hear all at once. My mind is sufficiently prepared by long hours of painful thought. I will show none of the weakness I displayed this morning. What is it you have found?"

"His knife and his knapsack," replied Lord H——.

"He may have cast it off from weariness," said Edith, catching at a hope.

"I fear not," replied her lover, unwilling to encourage expectations to be disappointed. "The straps of the knapsack were cut, not unbuckled, and your father has given himself up entirely to despair, although we found no traces of strife or bloodshed."

"Poor Walter!" said Edith, with a deep sigh; but she shed no tears, and walked on in silence till they had reached the little veranda of the house. Then suddenly she stopped, roused herself from her fit of thought, and said, raising her beautiful and tender eyes to her lover's face: "I have now two tasks before me to which I must give myself up entirely—to console my poor father, and to try to save my brother's life. Forgive me, George, if in executing these, especially the latter, I do not seem to give you as much of my thoughts as you have a right to. You would not, I know, have me neglect either."

"God forbid!" said Lord H——, warmly; "but let me share in them, Edith. There is nothing within the scope of honor and of right that I will not do to save your brother. I sent him on this ill-starred errand. To gratify me was that unfortunate expedition made through the wood; but it is enough that he is your brother and your father's son, and I will do anything, undertake anything, if there be still a hope. Go to your father first, my love, and then let us consult together. I will see these men attended to, for they want rest and food, and I must take liberties with your father's house to provide for them."

"Do! do!" she answered. "Use it as your own;" and leaving him in the veranda she turned to meet her father.

For the time, Edith well knew Mr. Prevost's mind was not likely to receive either hope or consolation. All she could give him was tenderness; and Lord H——, who followed her to speak with the soldiers and boatmen, soon saw her disappear into the house with Mr. Prevost. When

he returned to the little sitting-room Edith was not there, but he heard the murmur of voices from the room above, and in about half an hour she rejoined him. She was much more agitated than when she left him, and her face showed marks of tears; not that her fears were greater, or that she had heard anything to alarm her more, but her father's deep despair had overpowered her own firmness. All the weaker affections of human nature are infectious—fear, despair, dismay and sorrow peculiarly so.

Edith still felt, however, the importance of decision and action, and putting her hand to her head with a look of bewilderment, she stood for an instant in silence, with her eyes fixed on the ground, seemingly striving to collect her scattered thoughts in order to judge and act with precision.

“One of the boatmen, Edith,” said Lord H——, leading her to a seat, “has led me to believe that we shall have ample time for any efforts to serve your brother, if he has, as there is too much reason to fear, fallen into the hands of these revengeful Indians. The man seems to know well what he talks of, and boasts that he has been accustomed to the ways and manners of the savages since boyhood.”

“Is he a tall, handsome man, with two beautiful children?” asked Edith.

“He is a tall, good-looking man,” answered Lord H——, “but his children I did not see.”

“If he be the man I mean, he can be fully depended upon,” answered Edith, “and it may be well to ask his opinion and advice before he goes; but for the present, George, let us consult alone. Perhaps I can judge better than you of poor Walter's present situation; that is first to be considered, and then what are the chances, what the means, of saving him. He is certainly in the hands of the Indians, of that I have no doubt; and I think Black Eagle knew it when he guided us through the forest. Yet I do not think that he would willingly lift the tomahawk against

my brother. It will be at the last extremity, when all means have failed of entrapping that unhappy man Brooks. We shall have time; yes, we certainly have time."

"Then the first step to be taken," said Lord H——, "will be to induce the government to make a formal and imperative demand for his release. I will undertake that part of the matter; it shall be done at once."

Edith shook her head sadly. "You know them not," she said. "It would only hurry his fate;" and after dropping her voice to a very low tone, she added: "They would negotiate and hold councils, and Walter would be slain while they were treating."

She pressed her hands upon her eyes as she spoke, as if to shut out the dreadful image her words called up, and then there was a moment or two of silence, at the end of which Lord H—— inquired if it would not be better for him to see Sir William Johnson and consult with him.

"That may be done," said Edith. "No man in the province knows them as well as he does, and his advice may be relied upon; but we must take other measures, too. Otaita must be told, and consulted. Do you know, George," she added, with a melancholy smile, "I have lately been inclined at times to think that there is no small love between Walter and the Blossom—something more than friendship, at all events."

"But of course she will hear of his capture, and do the best she can to save him," replied the young nobleman.

Edith shook her head, answering: "Save him she will, if any human power can do it; but that she knows of his capture I much doubt. These Indians are wise, George, as they think, and never trust their acts, their thoughts, or their resolutions to a woman. They will keep the secret from Otaita just as Black Eagle kept it from me; but she must be informed, consulted, and perhaps acted with. Then I think, too, that poor man Woodchuck should have tidings of what his act has brought upon us."

"I see not well," said Lord H——, "what result that can produce."

"Nor I," answered Edith; "but yet it ought to be done, in justice to ourselves and to him. He is bold, skillful, and resolute, and we must not judge of any matter in this country as we should judge in Europe. He may undertake and execute something for my brother's rescue which you and I would never dream of. He is just the man to do so and to succeed. He knows every path of the forest, every lodge of the Indians. He is friendly with many of them, has saved the lives of some of them, I have heard him say, and conferred great obligations upon others; and I believe that he will never rest till he has delivered Walter."

"Then I will find him out and let him know the facts directly," said Lord H——; "perhaps he and Otaita may act together, if we can open any communication with her."

"She will act by herself and for herself, I am sure," replied Edith, "and some communication must be opened at any and all risk. But let us see this man, George; perhaps he may know someone going into the Indian territory who may carry a letter to her. It is a great blessing she can read and write, for we must have our secrets, too, if we would frustrate theirs."

Lord H—— rose, and proceeded to the hall, where the men whom he had brought with him were busily engaged in dispatching such provisions as Mr. Prevost's house could afford on the spur of the moment. The man he sought for was soon found, and when he had eaten the morsel almost between his teeth, he followed the young nobleman into the lesser room, and was soon in full conference with Edith and her lover. He again expressed the opinion that no harm would happen to young Walter Prevost for some months, at the least. "They have caught someone," he said, "to make sure of their revenge, and that is all they wanted for the present. Now they will look for the man that did it, and catch him if they can."

"Can you tell where he is to be found?" asked Lord H——, in a quiet tone.

"Why, you would not give him up to them?" said the man, sharply.

"Certainly not," replied Lord H. "He is in safety, and of that safety I have no right to deprive him; it would make me an accessory to their act. But I wish to see him, to tell him what has occurred, and to consult him as to what is to be done."

"That is a very different case," replied the man, gravely, "and if that's all you want, I don't mind telling you that he is in Albany, at the public house of the Three Boatmen. Our people, who rowed him down, said he did not intend to leave Albany for a week or more."

"And now, Robert," said Edith, "can you tell me where I can get a messenger to the Oneidas? I know you loved my brother Walter, and I think, if you can get somebody to go for me, we may save him."

"I did indeed love him well, Miss Prevost," replied the stout man, with his hard, firm eye moistening, "and I'd do anything in reason to save him. It's a sad thing we did not know of this yesterday, for there was a half-breed Onondaga runner passed by and got some milk from us, and I gave him the panther's skin which you told some of our people to send, my lord, in the poor lad's name, to the daughter of the old chief Black Eagle."

Edith turned her eyes to her lover's face, and Lord H—— replied to their inquiring look, saying: "It is true, Edith. Walter shot a panther in the woods, and wished to send the skin to Otaitisa. We had no time to lose at the moment, but as we came back I induced the guides to skin it, and made them promise to dry and send it forward by the first occasion."

"I strapped it on his back myself," said the man whom Edith called Robert, "and gave him the money you sent for him, too, my lord. He would have taken my message readily enough, and one could have trusted him; but it

may be months before such another chance offers, I guess. Look here, Miss Edith," he continued, turning toward her with his face full of earnest expression, "I would go myself, but what would come of it? They would only kill me instead of your brother, for one man is as good as another to them in such cases, and perhaps he mightn't get off, either. But I have a wife and two young children, ma'am, and that makes me not quite so ready to risk my life as I was a few years ago."

"It is not to be thought of," said Edith, calmly. "I could ask no one to go but one at least partly of their own race, for it must be the blood of a white man they spill, I know. All I can desire you to do is, for Master Walter's sake and mine, to seek for one of the Indian runners who are often about Albany, and about the army, and send him up to me."

"You see, Miss Prevost," replied the man, "there are not so many about as there used to be, for it is coming on winter; and as to the army, when Lord Loudon took it to Halifax almost all the runners and scouts were discharged. Some of them remained with Webb, it is true, but a number of those were killed and scalped by Montcalm's Hurons. However, I will make it my business to seek one, night and day, and send him up."

"Let it be someone on whom we can depend," said Edith; "someone whom you have tried and can trust."

"That makes it harder still," said the man; "for though I have tried many of them, I can trust few of them. However, I will see, and not be long about it, either. But it would be quite nonsense to send you a man who might either never do your message at all, or go and tell those you don't want to hear it."

"It would, indeed," said Edith, sadly, as all the difficulties and risks which lay in the way of success were suggested to her by the man's words. "Well, do your best, Robert," she said, at length, after some thought, "and as you will have to pay the man, here is the money for——"

"You can pay him yourself, ma'am," replied the boatman, bluntly. "As for taking any myself for helping poor Master Walter, that's what I won't do. When I've got to take an oar in hand, or anything of that kind, I make the people pay fast enough what my work is worth, perhaps a little more, sometimes," he added, with a laugh, "but not for such work as this—no! no! not for such work as this! So good-bye, Miss Prevost; good-bye, my lord. I won't let the grass grow under my feet in looking for some messenger."

Thus saying, he left the room, and Edith and Lord H—— were once more left alone together. Sad and gloomy was their conversation, unchecked by any of those light beams of love and joy which Edith had fondly fancied were to light her future hours. All was dim and obscure in the future, and the point upon which both their eyes turned most intently in the dark, shadowy curtain of coming time was the murkiest and most obscure of all. Still, whatever plan was suggested, whatever course of action was thought of, difficulties rose up to surround it, and perils presented themselves on all sides.

Nor did the presence of Mr. Prevost, who joined them soon after, tend in any degree to support or to direct. He had lost all hope, at least for the time, and the only thing which seemed to afford him a faint gleam of light was the thought of communicating immediately with Brooks.

"I fear Sir William Johnson will do nothing," he said; "he is so devoted even to the smallest interests of the government, his whole mind is so occupied with this one purpose of cementing the alliance between Britain and the Five Nations, that on my life I believe he would suffer any man's son to be butchered rather than risk offending an Indian tribe."

"In his position it is very difficult for him to act," said Lord H——, "but it might be as well to ascertain his feelings and his views by asking his advice as to how you should act yourself. Counsel he will be very willing to

give, I am sure, and in the course of conversation you might discover how much and how little you may expect from his assistance."

"But you said, my dear lord, that you were yourself going to Albany to-morrow to see poor Brooks," said Mr. Prevost. "I cannot leave Edith here alone."

All three mused for a moment or two, and Edith, perhaps, the deepest of all. At length, however, she said: "I am quite safe, my father; of that I am certain; and you will be so, I am sure, when you remember what I told you of Black Eagle's conduct to me on that fatal night. He threw his blanket around me and called me his daughter. Depend upon it, long ere this, the news that I am his adopted child has spread through all the tribes, and no one would dare to lift his hand against me."

"I can easily——" said Lord H——.

But Edith interrupted him gently, saying: "Stay, George—one moment! Let my father answer. Do you not think, my dear father, that I am quite safe? In a word, do you not believe that I could go from lodge to lodge as the adopted daughter of Black Eagle, throughout the whole length of the Long House of the Five Nations, without the slightest risk of danger? And if so, why should you fear?"

"I do indeed believe you could," replied Mr. Prevost. "Oh, that we could have extracted such an act from him toward poor Walter! What Edith says is right, my lord; we must judge these Indians as we know them, and my only fear in leaving her here now would arise in the risks of incursion from the other side of the Hudson."

Lord H—— mused a little. It struck him there was something strange in Edith's way of putting the question to her father, something too precise, too minute to be called for by any of the words which had been spoken. It excited nothing like suspicion in his mind, for it was hardly possible to look into the face or hear the tones of Edith Prevost, and entertain so foul a thing as suspicion. But it

made him doubt whether she had not some object, high and noble, he was sure, beyond the immediate point, which she did not think fit, as yet, to reveal.

"I was about to say," he replied at length, to the last words of Mr. Prevost, "that I can easily move a guard up here sufficient to protect the house; and I need not tell you, my dear sir," he continued, taking Edith's hand, "as the whole treasure of my happiness is here, that I would not advise you to leave her for an hour unless I felt sure she would be safe. I will send down by some of the men who are still in the house an order to Captain Hammond to march a guard here as early as possible to-morrow morning, under a trustworthy sergeant. As soon as it arrives I will set out for Albany; and I think you can go to Johnson's Castle in perfect security."

So it was arranged, and all parties felt no inconsiderable relief when some course of action was thus decided. Effort, in this world, is everything. Even the waters of joy will stagnate; and the greatest relief to care or sorrow, the strongest in danger or adversity, is effort.

The morning of the following day broke fresh and beautiful. There was a bright clearness in the sky, a brisk elasticity in the air, that had not been seen or felt for weeks. Everything looked sparkling, and sharp, and distinct. Distances were diminished; woods and hills which had looked dim appeared near and definite; and the whole world seemed in harmony with energy and effort. The heavy rains of the preceding morning had cleared the loaded atmosphere, as tears will sometimes clear the oppressed breast, and when Lord H—— and Mr. Prevost mounted their horses to set out, it seemed as if the invigorating air had restored to the latter the firmness and courage of which the grief and horror of the preceding day had deprived him.

Edith embraced her father, and gave her cheek to the warm touch of her lover's lips; and then she watched them as they rode away till the wood shut them out from her

sight. The soldiers were by this time installed in the part of the house destined for them, and some of the negroes were busy in preparing for their accommodation; but old Agrippa and the gardener boy, and a woman servant stood near, watching their master and his guest as they departed. As soon as the little party was out of sight, however, Edith turned to Agrippa, saying: "Send Chaudo to me in the parlor; I want to speak with him."

As soon as the man appeared she gazed at him earnestly, saying: "How far is it to Oneida Lake, Chaudo—have you ever been there?"

"Oh, yes, Missy, often when I was a little boy. Why, you know, my fadder ran away and live wid Ingins long time, 'cause he had bad master. But Ingins cuff him, and thump him more nor worst massa in the world, and so he come back again. How far be it? Oh, long way; twice so far as Johnson Castle, or more. Oh, yes; three times so far."

Edith knew how vague a negro's ideas of distance are, and she then put her question in a form which would get her a more distinct answer.

"Bethink you, Chaudo," she said, "how long it would take me to reach the lake—how long it would take anyone. Consider it well, and let me know."

"You, Missy! You!" cried the negro, in great astonishment. "You never think of going there?"

"I don't know, Chaudo," she replied. "It might be needful, and I wish to know how long it would take."

"Dat 'pend upon how you go, Missy," replied the man; "ride so far as Johnson Castle, but can't ride no farder. Den walk as I walk? You never do dat; and if you do, take you five days, and walk hard, too."

Poor Edith's heart sank. "Otaitsa walks," she said, in a desponding tone; "but it is true she can do much that I cannot do."

"She walk? Oh, dear no, Missy!" replied the negro. "She walk little bit o' way from what dey call Wood

Creek, or from de Mohawk. She walk no farder; all de rest she go in canoe, sometimes on Mohawk, sometimes on lake, sometimes on creek. She came here, once, in t'ree day, I hear old Gray Buzzard, de pipe-bearer, say, that time when de sachem come wid his warriors."

"And can I do the same?" asked Edith, eagerly.

"Sure you can, if you get canoe," answered Chaudo; "but oh, Missy, t'ink ob de Ingins! They kidnap Massa Walter; dey kill you, too!"

"There is no fear, Chaudo," replied Edith. "Even my father owns that I could safely go from one lodge to another, through the whole land of the Five Nations, because Black Eagle has put his blanket round me and made me his daughter."

"Massa know best," said Chaudo; "but if so, why dey kidnap Massa Walter?"

"Black Eagle refused to make him his son, or my father his brother," said Edith, with the tears rising in her eyes. "But the truth is, Chaudo, that I go to try if I can save poor Walter's life. I go to tell the Blossom that they hold my Walter—her Walter—a prisoner, and see whether she cannot find means to rescue him."

"I see, I see, Missy!" said the man, gravely. And then, after pausing for a moment, he asked, abruptly: "I go with you?"

"Someone I must have, to show me the way," replied Edith. "Are you afraid, Chaudo?"

"Afraid!" cried the man, bursting into a fit of joyous laughter. "Oh, no, not afraid! Ingins no hurt nigger; kick him, cuff him; no scalp him, 'cause nigger got no scalp-lock. Ha! ha! ha! I go help save Massa Walter. He never hab no good thing but he give Chaudo some. Oh, I'll manage all for you. We find plenty canoe, Mohawk canoe, Oneida canoe, if we say you Black Eagle's daughter, going to see you sister Otaita. When you go, Missy?"

"Very soon, Chaudo," replied Edith, and proceeded to explain her plan to him still farther. She said that she

wished to set out that very day, and as soon as possible, in order, first, to communicate the tidings of Walter's capture to Otaitsa without delay; and secondly, to save her father as many hours of anxiety as possible. She did not absolutely tell the man that she had not informed her father of her intention, but he divined it well. Nevertheless, when he heard somewhat more at large the conduct of Black Eagle toward her on the night of poor Walter's capture, he was quite satisfied of her safety as far as the Indians were concerned. He urged her, however, to go in the first place to Johnson Castle, where she could procure a canoe, or even a batteau, he felt certain; and it was long before he comprehended her objection to that course. At length, however, his usual "I see, I see!" showed that he had caught a light at last, and then he was soon ready with his resources.

"Den we walk to the nearest end of little pond; only t'ree mile," he said, "fishing canoe all ready; next we go down little pond and de creek into lake, keep by nort' side, and den walk to Mohawk, t'ree mile more. I carry canoe 'cross on my back. Den, Ingin or no Ingin, we get along. If Missy like to take oder nigger, too, we get on very fast, and he carry bundle."

"I must have one of the women with me," said Edith, in a thoughtful tone, "but which?"

The negro's countenance fell a little. He was very proud of the confidence placed in him, and he did not like to share it with a white woman. His tone, then, was rather dejected, though submissive, when he asked: "Do Missy take white woman, Sally, wid her? Sally no walk. Sally no run. Sally no paddle when Chaudo is tired."

"No," replied Edith at once. "I can take no white person with me, Chaudo, for it would risk her life; and even to save my poor brother I must not lure another into sad peril. One of your color, Chaudo, they will not hurt; for it is a white man's blood they will have for a white man's act."

"Then take Sister Bab!" cried Chaudo, rubbing his hands, with the peculiar, low negro chuckle. "Sister Bab walk, run, carry bundle, and twirl paddle wid anybody."

Now Bab was a stout negro woman of about forty years of age, with a pleasant countenance and very fine white teeth, who rejoiced in the cognomen of sister, though, to the best of Edith's knowledge, she was sister to no one—in the house, at least. Her usual occupations were in the farm-yard, the dairy, and the pigsty; so that Edith had not seen very much of her; but all that she had seen was pleasant, for Sister Bab seemed continually on the watch to do everything for everybody, receiving every order, even from "Master Walter," who was sometimes a little inconsiderate, with a broad, good-humored grin; and her constant activity and indefatigable energy promised well for an undertaking such as that in which Edith was engaged.

"Well, Chaudo," said the young lady, "I do not know that I could make a better choice. Send Sister Bab to me, for where dangers such as these are to be encountered, I will not take anyone without her own free consent."

"Oh, she go, I talk wid her," said Chaudo; "you nebber trouble yourself, Missy. She go to world's end with Miss Edith, and fight like debbel if dere be need. I nebber saw woman so good at catching fish; she'd hook 'em out like cabbages."

"That may be useful to us, too," said Edith, with a faint smile; "but send her to me, nevertheless, Chaudo; I want to speak with her before I go."

The good woman, when she came, made not the slightest objection; but, on the contrary, looked upon the expedition as something very amusing, which would give a relief to the tedium of her daily labors, and at the same time afford full occupation for her active spirit. She was as ready with suggestions as Chaudo; told Edith everything she had better take with her, detailed all her own proposed preparations, and even begged for a rifle, declaring that she was as good a shot as "Massa Walter," and had often fired his

gun when he had brought it home undischarged. Edith declined, however, to have a riflewoman in her train; and having told her two chosen attendants that she would be ready in an hour, retired to make her preparations, and write a few lines to her father and her lover to account for her absence when they returned. Both letters were brief, but we will only look at that which she left for Mr. Prevost.

"My dear father," she said, "I am half afraid I am doing wrong in taking the step I am about to take, without your knowledge or approbation; but I cannot sit still and do nothing while all are exerting themselves to save my poor brother. I feel that it is absolutely necessary to any hope for his safety that Otaita should be informed immediately of his situation. It may be months before any Indian runner is found, and my poor brother's fate may be sealed. Were it to cost my life, I should think myself bound to go. But I am the only one who can go in perfect safety; for, while promising his protection to me, and insuring me against all danger, the Black Eagle refused to give any assurance in regard to others. You have yourself acknowledged, my dear father, that I shall be perfectly safe; and I have also the advantage of speaking the Indian tongue well. In these circumstances would it not be wrong, would it not be criminal in me to remain here idle when I have even a chance of saving my poor brother? Forgive me, then, if I do wrong, on account of the motives which lead me.

"My course is straight to the Mohawk, by the little pond and the lake, and then up the Mohawk and Wood Creek as far as they will carry me; for I wish to save myself as much fatigue as possible, and I venture to take the canoe from the pond. I have asked Chaudo and Sister Bab to accompany me, as I know you would wish me to have protection and assistance on the way, in case of any difficulty. I hope to be back in six days at the farthest; and, if possible, I will send a runner to inform you of my safe arrival amongst the Oneidas. Once more, my dear father, think of

the great object I have in view, and forgive your affectionate daughter."

When these letters were written, Edith dressed herself in full Indian costume, which had been given her by Otaita; and a beautiful Indian maiden she looked, though the skin was somewhat too fair and her hair wanted the jetty black. In the Indian pouch, or wallet, she placed some articles of European convenience, and a large hunting knife; and then, making up a small package of clothes for Sister Bab to carry, she descended to the lower story. Here, however, she met with some impediments which she had not expected. The news of her proposed expedition had spread through the whole household and caused almost an open revolt. The white women were in tears; old Agrippa was clamorous; and the fat black cook declared loudly that Miss Edith was mad, and should not go. So far, indeed, did she carry her opposition, that the young lady was obliged to assume a stern and severe tone, which was seldom heard in Edith's voice, and command her to retire at once from her presence. The poor woman was at once overawed, for her courage was not very permanent, and, bursting into tears, she left the room, declaring she was sure she should never see Miss Edith again.

Edith then gave all the keys of the house to old Agrippa, with the two letters which she had written; Chaudo took up the bag of provisions which he had prepared; Sister Bab charged herself with the package of clothes; and Edith, walking between them, turned away from her father's house, amidst the tears of the white women, and a vociferous burst of grief from the negroes.

Her own heart sank for a moment, and she asked herself, "Shall I ever pass that threshold again? Shall I ever be pressed hereafter in the arms of those I so much love?"

But she banished such feelings, and drove away such thoughts; and murmuring, "My brother—my poor brother!" she walked on.

CHAPTER XII

LEAVING Edith to pursue her way toward the Oneida territory, and Mr. Prevost, after parting with Lord H—— at the distance of some three miles from his own house, to ride on to Johnson Castle, let us follow the young nobleman to Albany, where he arrived somewhat after nightfall. His first duty, as he conceived it, led him to the quarters of the commander-in-chief, where he made a brief but clear report of all that had occurred in his transactions with the Indians.

“I found,” he said, “from information communicated by Sir William Johnson, that there was no need of any concealment; but that, on the contrary, it would be rather advantageous to appear at the meeting with the Five Nations in my proper character. The results were what I have told you. There is one other point, however, which I think it necessary to mention, and which, if imprudently treated, might lead to serious results.”

He then went on to state generally the facts in regard to the death of the Indian by the hands of Woodchuck, and the supposed capture of Walter Prevost by a party of the Oneidas. It would be uninteresting to the reader to hear the particulars of the conversation which followed. Suffice it to say, that the government of the colony in all its departments was very well disposed to inactivity at that time, and not at all inclined to exert itself for the protection of individuals, or even of greater interests, unless strongly pressed to do so. This Lord H—— was not at all inclined to do, as he was well aware from all he had heard that no action on the part of the government short of the sudden

march of a large body of troops would effect the liberation of Walter Prevost, and that to expect such a movement, which itself might be unsuccessful, was quite out of the question with the officers who were in command at the time.

His conference with the commander-in-chief ended, he declined an invitation to supper, and went out on his search for the small inn where he had been told he would find the man whose act, however justifiable, had brought so much wretchedness upon Mr. Prevost's family.

The city of Albany, in those days, as we have reason to know from very good authority, though not numbering by many thousands as great a population as it contains at present, occupied a space nearly as large as the present city. One long street ran by the river, to the very verge of which beautiful and well cultivated gardens extended; and from the top of the hill down to this lower street ran another, very nearly, if not exactly, of the same position and extent as the present State street. On the top of the hill was the fort; and built in the center of the large, descending street which swept round them on either side, were two or three churches, a handsome market place, and a guard-house. A few other streets ran down the hill in a parallel line with this principal one; and other small streets, lanes, and alleys connected them all together. Nevertheless, the population, as I have said, was comparatively very small, for between house and house, and street and street, throughout the whole town, were large and beautiful gardens filling up spaces now occupied by buildings and thronged with human beings. A great part of the population was at that time Dutch, and all the neatness and cleanliness of true Dutch houses and Dutch streets was to be seen in Albany in those days—would we could say as much at present. No pigs then ran in the streets, to the horror of the eye and the annoyance of the passenger; no cabbage leaves or stalks disgraced the gutter; and the only place in which anything like filth or uncleanness

was to be seen was at the extremity of the littoral street, where, naturally, the houses of the boatmen and others connected with the shipping were placed for the sake of approximating to the water. There, certainly, some degree of dirt existed, and the air was perfumed with the high savor of tar and tobacco.

It was toward this part of the town that Lord H—— directed his steps, inquiring for the inn called "The Three Boatmen." Several times, however, was he frustrated in his attempt to obtain information by the ignorance of a great portion of the inhabitants of the English language; and the pipe was removed from the mouth only to reply in Dutch, "I do not understand."

At length, however, he was directed aright, and found a small and somewhat mean-looking house, in which an adventurous Englishman from the purlieus of Clare Market had established a tavern for the benefit of boatmen. It had in former times belonged to a Dutch settler, and still retained many of the characteristic features of its origin, while four trees stood in line before the door, with benches underneath them for the convenience of those who chose to sit and poison the sweet air of the summer evening with the fumes of tobacco.

Entering through a swing door into the narrow, sandy passage, which descended one step from the street, Lord H—— encountered a negro tapster with a white apron, of whom he inquired if Captain Brooks was still there.

"Oh, yes, Massa Officer," said the man, with a grin. "You mean Massa Woodchuck," he continued, showing that the good man's Indian nickname was very extensively known. "You find him in dere, in de coffee room," and he pointed to a door, once white, now yellow and brown with smoke, age, and dirty fingers.

Lord H—— opened the door and went in amongst as strange and unprepossessing an assemblage of human beings as it had ever been his chance to light upon. The air was rendered obscure by smoke, so that the candles looked

dim and red; and it was literally difficult to distinguish the objects around. What the odor was it is impossible to say, for it was as complicated as the antidote of Mithridates; but the predominant smells were certainly those of beer, rum, and Holland gin. Some ten or twelve little tables of exceedingly highly polished mahogany, but stained here and there by the contaminating marks of wet glasses, divided the room amongst them, leaving just space between each to place two chairs, back to back; and in this small den not less than five or six and twenty people were congregated, almost all drinking, almost all smoking, some talking very loud, some sitting in profound silence, as the quantity of liquor imbibed or the national characteristics of the individual might prompt. Gazing through the haze upon this scene, which, besides the sturdy and coarse, but active Englishman, and the heavy, phlegmatic Dutchman, contained one or two voluble Frenchmen, deserters from the Canadas, none of them showing themselves in a very favorable light, Lord H—— could not help comparing the people before him with the free, wild Indians he had lately left, and asking himself: “Which are the savages?”

At length his eye, however, fell upon a man sitting at the table in the corner of the room next to the window. He was quite alone, with his back turned to the rest of the people in the place, his head leaning on his hand, and a short pipe laid down upon the table beside him. He had no light before him, as most of the others had, and he might have seemed asleep, so still was his whole figure, had it not been that the fingers of his right hand, which rested on the table, beat time to an imaginary tune. Approaching close to him, Lord H—— drew a seat to the table and laid a hand upon his arm. Woodchuck looked round, and a momentary expression of pleasure, slight, and passing away rapidly, crossed his rugged features.

The next moment his face was all cold and stern again.

“Very kind of you to come and see me, my lord,” he

said, in a dull, sad tone. "What do you want with me? Have you got anything for me to do?"

"I am sorry to see you looking so melancholy, Captain," said Lord H——, evading his question. "I hope nothing else has gone amiss."

"Haven't I cause enough to be melancholy," said the other, looking round at the people in the room, "cooped up with a penful of swine? Come out—come out to the door. It's cold enough out, but the coldest wind that ever blew is better than the filthy air of these pigs."

As he spoke he rose, and a little, pert-looking Frenchman, who had overheard him, exclaimed in a bantering tone: "Why you call us pigs more nor yourself de great hog?"

"Get out of my way, for fear I break your back," said Woodchuck, in a low, stern voice. "If your neck had been broken long ago, it would have been better for your country and for mine;" and taking up the little Frenchman by the nape of the neck with one arm, he set him upon the table from which he had just arisen.

A roar of laughter burst from a number of the assembled throats; the little Frenchman sputtered with wrath, without daring to carry the expression of his indignation farther; and Woodchuck strode quietly out of the room, followed by his military visitor.

"Here—let us sit down here," he said, placing himself on a bench under a leafless tree, and leaving room for Lord H—— by his side. "I am gloomy enough, my lord, and haven't I reason to be so? Here I am for life. This is to be my condition with the swine that gather up in these sties of cities, suffocating in such dens as these. I guess I shall drown myself some day, when I am driven quite mad. I know a man has no right to lay hands upon himself. I larnt my Bible when I was young, and know what's God's will, so I sha'n't do anything desperate so long as I be right here," and he laid his finger on his forehead. "No! no! I'll just take as much care of my life," he con-

tinned, "as though it were a baby I was nursing; but unless them Ingians catch some other white man and kill him—which God forbid—I've got to stay here for life; and even if they do, it's more nor a chance they'd kill me, too, if they got me; and when I think of them beautiful woods and pleasant lakes, with the pictures of everything round painted so beautiful on them when they are still, and the streams that go dancing and splashing along over the big black stones and the small white pebbles, seeming for all the world to sing as if for pleasure at their freedom, and the open, friendly air of the hillside, and the clouds skimming along, and the birds glancing through the branches, and the squirrels skipping and chattering as if they were mocking everything not so nimble as themselves, I do often believe I shall go crazed to think I shall never see those things again."

Lord H—— felt for him much, for he had in his own heart a sufficient portion of love for the wilder things of nature to sympathize in some degree with one who loved them so earnestly.

"I trust, Woodchuck," he said, "that we shall be able to find some employment for you with the army—if not with my own corps with some other, which may give you glimpses at least of the scenes you love so well, and of the unconfined life you have lived so long; but I have come to consult you upon a subject of much and immediate importance, and we must talk of that the first thing."

"What is that?" asked Brooks, in an indifferent tone, fixing his eyes upon the stones of the street, faintly lighted by the glare from within the house.

Lord H—— began his account of what had happened between the Mohawk and the Hudson with some circumlocution, for he did not feel at all sure of the effect it would produce upon his companion's mind, and the Woodchuck seemed to fall into one of those deep reveries in which one may be said to hear without hearing. He took not the slightest notice of what his noble visitor said regarding the

burning of the wood, or the danger of Mr. Prevost and Edith. It seemed to produce no more distinct effect than would the wind whistling in his ears. He sat calm and silent, without an observation, but he grew more attentive, though only in a slight degree, when the narrator came to mention the anxiety of the family at the protracted absence of Walter; and when at last Lord H—— described the finding of the knife and the knapsack, and told of the conclusions to which the whole family had come, he started up, exclaiming: "What's that! What's that!" and then, after a moment's pause, he sank down upon his seat again, saying, with a groan: "They have got him—they have got him, and they will tomahawk him—the bloody, barbarous critters! Couldn't they have chosen some more worthless thing than that!"

Pressing his hand tight upon his forehead, as if he fancied the turbulent thoughts within would burst it, he remained for a moment or two in silence, till Lord H—— asked if he imagined they would execute their bloody purposes speedily.

"No! no!" cried the man. "No fear of that; they'll take time enough; that's the worst of the savages. It's no quick rage, no angry heat with them—no word and a blow. It's cold, bitter, long-premeditated hatred. They wouldn't have half the pleasure if they didn't draw out their revenge by the week and the month—but what's to be done now—gracious God! what's to be done now?"

"That is precisely what I came to consult you upon," said Lord H——; "but let us talk over the matter calmly, my good friend. This is a case where grief, anger, and indignation can do nothing, but where deliberate thought, reason, and policy, even cunning, such as their own—for, if we could arrive at it, we should be quite justified in using it—may, perhaps, do something to save this poor boy!"

"How the devil would you have me calm!" exclaimed the man, vehemently; but then, suddenly checking himself, he said: "You're right, you're right. I am forgetting

my old habits in these smoky holes ; thought, cunning, those are the only things to do with an Indian. It's tarnation hard to outwit them, but it may be done when one knows his tracks well. I can't get my brain to hold steady to-night ; this story has upset all my thoughts, and I've got no consideration in me. You must give me a night and a day to think over the matter, and then I'll see what's to be done. By the Lord, Walter sha'n't die ! Poor fellow ! What should he die for ? However, I guess it's no use talking in that sort of manner. I must think of what's to be done ; that's the business in hand. I'll think as soon as I can, my lord ; only you just now tell me all you have done, if you've done anything. As for Prevost, I don't suppose he's had time to do much, for though he's always right in the end, and no man's opinion is worth more, yet if you touch his heart and his feelings, as you call them, his wits get all in a work, just like mine at this minute. More fool he, and I, too !"

"We have done something," said Lord H—— in reply. "Mr. Prevost set out this morning to see Sir William Johnson——"

"He's no good !" growled Woodchuck, impatiently.

"I came hither to consult with you," continued Lord H——, "and we have commissioned the boatman, whom they call Robert, a tall, stout man——"

"I know him ! I know him !" said Woodchuck. "Passably honest—the best of them."

"Well, we have commissioned him," resumed the young nobleman, "to seek for some Indian runner, or half-breed, to carry news of this event to Otaitsa, whom Edith believes the tribe will keep in the dark in regard to the capture of Walter."

"Likely, likely," said the Woodchuck. "Miss Prevost understands them. They'll not tell the women anything, for fear they should meddle. They've a poor opinion of squaws. But the girl may do a great deal of good, too, if you can get the tidings to her. She's not as cunning as the rest

of them, but she has more heart and soul, and resolution, too, than a whole tribe of Indian women—that comes of her mother being a white woman.”

“Her mother a white woman!” exclaimed Lord H——.

“Aye; didn’t you know that?” said Woodchuck. “Just as white as Miss Prevost, and quite a lady, too, she was, to look at, or to speak to—though she was not fond of speaking with white men, and would draw back into the lodge whenever she saw one. I did speak to her once, though, when she was in a great fright about Black Eagle, who had gone to battle against the French; and I, happening to come that way, gave her some news of him. But we are getting astray from what’s of more matter than that. The girl will save him, take my word for it, if there’s strength enough in that little body to do it. But let me see—you talk of Indian runners; where is one to be found who can be trusted? They’re generally a bad set, the scum of the tribes; no real warrior would take up on such a trade. However, what’s to be done? No white person can go; for they’d scalp him to a certainty, and he would give his life for Walter’s, that’s all. On my life, it would be as well to give the dangerous errand to some felon, as I have heard say they do in despotic countries—give criminals some dangerous task to perform; and they, if they succeed and escape, so much the better for them; if they die, so much the better for the community. But I’m getting wandering again,” he continued, rising. “Now, my lord, this is no use. Give me a few hours to think—tomorrow, at noon, if you will—and then I’ll come and tell you what my opinion is.”

As he spoke, he turned abruptly toward the house, without any ceremonious leave-taking, and only looked round to put one more question:

“At the fort, I suppose?” he said.

Lord H—— assented, and Brooks entered the house and at once sought his own chamber.

CHAPTER XIII

IN a small room, under a roof which slanted out in a straight line, but made an obtuse angle in the midst of descent, lighted alone by a horn lantern, such as was used on board the river boats at night, sat the stout man whom we have described under the name of Brooks. Little furniture of any kind did the room contain. There was a small half-tester bed with its dull curtains of a broad red and white checkered stuff; there was the little table at the side of the room, jammed close against the wall; there was the solitary chair; the washstand, with its basin and its ewer, both somewhat maimed; there was the little looking-glass hanging from a nail driven in the wall, with its narrow, badly gilt frame, and its plate so distorted that when one looked in it the reflection seemed to be making faces at the original. Dull with imbibing many a year's loaded atmosphere, were those faded walls; and many a guest had written upon them, in pencil, his own name or the name of his sweetheart—permanent memorials of transitory tenants, long-cherished memories of affections gone to the grave. There were two or three distiches, too, and a quatrain somewhat more polished.

But the man who sat there noted none of those things. The dim light, the gloomy aspect of the room, might sink in upon his spirit, and render the darkness within more dark; the strange, ill-looking double arch of the ceiling, the obtrusive two straight lines instead of one, with the blunt, unmeaning angle between them, giving an aspect of brokenness to the roof, as if it were ready to bulge out and then crash down, might irritate, without his knowing why. But

still he noted them not with anything like observation. His mind was busy with things of its own—things in which feeling took a share, as well as thought—and he was, if not dead, sleeping to the external world. Even his beloved woods and streams, and fresh air, and open skies, were forgotten for the time.

He argued with himself a case of conscience hard to solve.

He was as brave a man as ever lived; habituated all his life to perils of many kinds, and had met them all fearlessly. Wake him in the woods at midnight, you would find him ready. Deafen his ear with the drum or the war-whoop, you could not make him start. He blinked not at the cannon flash, or the blaze of the lightning; and would have faced the fiery-mouthed platoon without a wavering step.

And yet the love of life was strong in him. He had so many joys in the bright treasury of nature; to his simple, nay, wild tastes, there were so many pleasures in the wide world, that to part with them was hard—very hard.

He had never known how valuable earthly existence was to him till that hour. He had never felt how different a thing it is to hazard it in bold daring, or to contemplate the throwing of it away in reckless passion, or disappointment and despair, from calmly and deliberately laying it down as a sacrifice, whatever be the end, the inducement, or the duty.

What was the case of conscience he proposed to himself? Simply this: whether he should suffer another to die for his act, or place himself not only in the peril from which he had lately escaped, but in the actual grasp of death. Some men of enthusiastic spirit and great constitutional fearlessness might have decided the matter at a dash, and, with the first impulse of a generous nature, cast themselves under the uplifted tomahawk to save their innocent friend. But he was not such, and I do not intend so to represent him. He was not a man to do anything without deliberation, without calculating all things, though he was as

generous as most men, as this world goes. All his habits, the very course of his previous life, disposed him to careful forethought. Every day had had its watchfulness, every hour its precaution. The life of the woods, in those days, was a life of peril and preparation, where consideration might be very rapid, but was always needful.

And now he debated the question with himself. Could he live on and suffer Walter Prevost to die in his place? There were strenuous advocates on both sides, but the love of life was the most subtle, if generosity was the most eloquent.

“Poor boy!” he thought. “Why should he die for what I have done? Why should he be cut off so soon from all life’s hopes and blessings? Why should his father’s eyes be drowned in tears, and his sister’s heart wrung with grief, when I can save them all? And he so frank and noble, too! so full of every kindly feeling and generous quality—so brave—so honest—so true-hearted! Innocent, too! Innocent of every offence—quite innocent in this case!”

But then spoke self, and he thought: “Am not I innocent, too? As innocent as he is? Did I ever harm the man? Did I provoke the savage? Did I not slay him in pure self-defence? And shall I lay down the life I then justly protected at the cost of that of another human being, because a race of fierce Indians, unreasoning, bloodthirsty savages, choose to offer a cruel sacrifice to their god of revenge, and have found a victim?”

“Still,” he continued, taking the other side, “it is for my act the sacrifice is offered; and, if there must be a sacrifice, ought not the victim to be myself? Besides, were it any worthless life that was in jeopardy—were it that of some desperate rover—some criminal—some man without ties, or friendships, or affections, one might leave him to his fate, perhaps, without remorse; but this poor lad—how many hopes are centered in him! What will not his family lose? What will not the world? And I—what am I, that

my life should be weighed against his? Is he not my friend, too, and the son of my friend, one who has always overflowed with kindness and regard toward me?"

His resolution was almost taken; but then the cunning pleader, vanquished in direct argument, suggested a self-deceit.

"It is strange," he thought, "that these Indians, and especially their chief, should fix upon one with whom they have ever been so friendly—should choose a youth whom they have looked upon as a brother, when they might surely have found some other victim. Can this be a piece of their savage cunning? They know how well I love the lad, and how much friendship has been shown me by his father. Can they have taken him as a bait to their trap, without any real intention of sacrificing him, and only in the hope of luring me into their power?"

At first sight, the supposition seemed reasonable, and he was inclined to congratulate himself that he had not precipitately fallen into the snare. "How they would have yelled with triumph when they found me bringing my head to the hatchet!"

But speedily his knowledge of the Indian character and habits undeceived him. He knew that in such cases they always made sure of some victim, and that the more near and dear he was to the offender the better for their purpose—himself first, a relation next, a friend next; and he cast the self-fraud away from him.

But the love of life had not yet done, though obliged to take another course and suggest modifications. Was there no middle course to be taken? Was it absolutely necessary that he should sacrifice his own life to save that of Walter Prevost? Could the object not be effected without his giving himself up to the savages? Might not someone else fall into their hands? Might not the lad be rescued by some daring effort? This was the most plausible suggestion of all, but it was the one that troubled him the most. He had detected so many attempts in his own heart to

cheat himself, that he suspected he might be deceiving himself still; and his mind got puzzled and confused with doubts.

He went to the bed and lay down in his clothes, but he could not sleep without taking some resolution; and rising again, he pressed his hands upon his aching temples, and determined to cast away self from the question altogether—to look upon it as if it affected some other person and Walter Prevost, and judge accordingly.

His plan succeeded. He separated the truth from the falsehood, and came to the conclusion that it would be folly to go and give himself up to certain death as long as there was a chance of saving his young friend by other means; but that it was right to do so if other means failed; and that neither by delay nor even uncertain efforts, must he risk the chance of saving him by the ultimate sacrifice. He made up his mind accordingly, to re-enter the Indian territory in spite of every peril, to conceal himself as best he could, to watch the Indians as he would watch a wild beast, and be ready for any opportunity or for any decision; and when his resolution was finally taken he lay down and slept profoundly.

CHAPTER XIV

AND what was Edith's journey? Would the reader have me present it as a picture—as it appeared to her after it was over—massed together in its extraordinary rapidity, and seen but from one point at the end?

Swiftly skimming in a bark canoe upon the glossy bosoms of the lovely lakes, which reflected every hue of herb and tree, and sky and mountain, darting along bright and sparkling streams, sometimes beneath the overhanging canopy of boughs, sometimes under the pure blue eye of heaven. Often struggling with a rapid, often having to pass along the shore to turn a waterfall; at times walking along through the glowing woods, burning with the intense coloring of autumn; at times surrounded by a number of Indians, each rendering quiet, earnest service to the adopted daughter of the great Oneida chief; at times wandering on in the dim forest, with no one but her two dark attendants near; now the fierce howl of the midnight wolf sounding in her ear; now the sharp, garrulous cry of the bluejay; now the shrill scream of the woodhaw. Now the Indian lodge or castle, as the Iroquois sometimes called their dwellings, now the brown canopy of the autumn wood covered her; but still, under the skillful guidance and with the eager help of the two negroes, she went forward with extraordinary rapidity, leaving miles and miles behind her every hour. It seemed almost like a pleasant dream, or at least it would have seemed so had the sad and fearful motives which led her on been ever banished from her mind. Even as it was, the variety of the objects, the constant succession of new matters of interest, the events, small in

themselves, but important to her, which occurred to facilitate or impede her progress, were all a relief to her overcharged mind, and she reached the Oneida territory less depressed than when she set out from her home.

One cause, perhaps, of the feeling of renewed strength which she experienced was a renewal of hope from the conduct of the Indians toward her wherever she met them. She found that even amongst the Mohawks she was recognized at once as the adopted daughter of the great Oneida chief; and it was evident that he had spread far and wide, as he returned to his own abode after the conference at Johnson Castle, the fact of his having adopted the daughter of the paleface, Prevost. There is always something, too, in the fact of an enterprise being actually commenced, which gives spirit to pursue it to the end. While we stand and gaze at it from a distance, hesitating whether we shall undertake it or not, the difficulties are magnified, the facilities obscured; the rock and precipice rise up threateningly to our imagination, while the small paths by which they may be surmounted are unseen.

Day had yet an hour of life when Edith approached what we find called in the history of the times, "The Castle of the Oneidas." "Wigwam" it is customary to name all the Indian villages, giving an idea of insignificance and meanness, and completely savage state, which the principal residences of the Five Nations did not at that time merit. Most of them were very like that which Edith now approached. It was built upon a slight elevation near the lake, with a large protruding rock near it; for the Oneidas always affected near their dwelling some symbol significant of their favorite appellation, "The Children of the Stone." Around it were high palisades, enclosing a considerable area, within which the huts of the Indians were constructed. Rising considerably above the rest were two wooden buildings, in the erection of which European workmanship was apparent. The one was a large, oblong building, regularly roofed and shingled, like that of any English settler. It

consisted of two stories, and in the upper one regular framed windows were to be seen. In the lower story there were none, light being admitted by the door. That lower story, however, was floored by plain pine boards, and divided by a sort of curtain into two equal compartments. The other building bore the appearance of a church in miniature, with a small cottage or hut attached, which was in reality the residence of the missionary, Mr. Gore.

Even Edith was surprised to see the home of Otaita so different from the ideas conveyed to her by the wandering traders, who even while carrying on commercial intercourse with the tribes, were in a state of semi-hostility toward the Indians, representing them as bloody savages, and cheating them whenever they could.

Slowly walking on between her two negro companions, for she was tired with a longer walk than usual, Edith approached the open gates of the Castle and met with no opposition in entering. A tall, handsome warrior passed out, fully clothed in Indian costume, and only marked out from any civilized man by the shaved head and the painfully significant scalp-lock. His step was stately and calm, and his air grave and reserved. Twice he turned his eyes upon Edith's face, with a look of evident wonder and admiration, but he took no farther notice, and passed on. He was the only man whom she saw on entering the village, till after passing through many huts, where women and children were to be seen busily employed, she came in sight of the door of the chief's house, and beheld there a figure seated on the ground, quietly engaged in the art of embroidery, after the fashion in which the Indian women so greatly excel.

It was a figure which she knew well; and the tranquil air and easy grace, as well as the quiet, peaceful employment, showed Edith at once that she had not been mistaken in supposing that Otaita was altogether ignorant of the peril of one dear to them both. As she came near, she heard the Indian girl, in her happy ignorance, singing a

sweet but somewhat plaintive song; and the next moment, Otaitsa, raising her eyes, beheld the three figures, and at once perceived that they were not of her people.

For an instant she did not recognize Edith in her Indian garb; but when she did recognize her, the emotion produced was alarm rather than joy. She felt at once that some great and important event—some occurrence full of peril or of sorrow—must have brought Edith thither. The beautiful lips parted with a tremulous motion; the large dark eye, Indian in its color, but European in its form, became full of anxiety; the rosy color of her cheek, which probably had obtained for her the name of the Blossom, faded away, and paleness spread over the clear brown skin. Starting up, however, she cast the embroidery away from her, and springing forward, threw her arms around Edith's neck. Then, as her hand rested on her fair companion's shoulder, she asked in a whisper: "What is it, my sister? There must be a storm in the sky—there must be lightning in the cloud! What tempest wind has swept my sister hither? What flood of sorrow has borne Edith to Otaitsa?"

"Hush!" said Edith, in a low tone, for there were some other Indian women near. "I will tell my sister when no ears can hear but her own. There is tempest in the sky. A pine tree has fallen across the threshold of my father's house, and we are sad for fear the hatchet of the woodman should lop all its green branches away. Can I speak with the Blossom speedily, and in secret?"

"Instantly," answered Otaitsa. "The warriors have all gone forth to hunt for three days the bear and the moose. The Black Eagle is with them. There are but three men of deeds in the Castle, now, and why they are women now and go not forth to the hunting with the rest, I cannot tell. But they are little within the palisade—daily they go forth, and remain absent long. Come in hither, my sister, for though few here speak the tongue we speak, it were better not to let the wind hear us."

"Can some of the women give food and lodging to these two negroes?" asked Edith, adding: "They have been well warned, and know that a life depends upon their silence."

Otaitsa called to an elderly Indian woman who was cooking at the door of a cabin near, and placed Chaudo and his companion under her charge. She then turned to Edith, saying: "Come, my sister;" but before they entered the building, Edith inquired if Mr. Gore was there, saying: "Perhaps he might give us counsel."

"My father sent him away some days ago," answered Otaitsa. "He will not be back for a month, perhaps longer. I think he has sent him to secure him from danger."

"Alas," said Edith, "that the danger should have fallen upon others!"

"Alas! alas!" said Otaitsa, and Edith felt her hand tremble much as she led her into the building.

A staircase, rude indeed, but still a staircase, led from the more barnlike part of the building below to the upper floor, and in this respect appeared the first difference between this house—for it deserved the name—and the lodge, or castle, of King Hendrick the younger, though both had been built by European workmen, and that of King Hendrick at the cost of the British government, which was not the case with the dwelling of the Oneida chief. As soon, however, as you reached the upper floor, the differences became more frequent and more remarkable. It was partitioned off into rooms, with regular doors between them; and when Edith entered the chamber of Otaitsa she saw at once how she acquired European habits. Of rude manufacture, but still very correct as imitations, and not without a certain degree of uncouth ornament, were chairs, tables, and writing materials, a bedstead and a bed; and from wooden pegs, driven into the partition, depended some sketches—some colored, some in pencil, but all very different from the gaudy daubs which, at a later period, ped-

dlers were accustomed to take into the Indian territory as articles of barter.

As Edith's eye glanced around, it gleaned a general notion of all these things, but her mind was too full of deeper and sadder thoughts to suffer even curiosity to turn it from its course for a moment.

"There is no one in any other chamber here," said Otaita. "None comes up these stairs but myself and my father. Now, Edith, speak, for Otaita's heart is very heavy and her mind misgives her sadly. Is it your father they have taken?"

"No; oh no!" answered Edith, "but one as dear;" and she went on briefly to relate all that had occurred, endeavoring to soften and prepare the way for intelligence which she feared would affect the Indian girl much. But Otaita darted at her own conclusions, divining the whole truth almost as soon as the words were spoken. She was far more affected than Edith had anticipated. She cast herself upon her fair companion's neck and wept aloud.

"He was mine, Edith," she said, in the full confidence of sorrow. "He was mine, my betrothed, my loved; and they have hidden it from me—hidden it from all the Indian women here, for they knew that everyone in the tribe loved him, though not so well as I. Where was the poor wanderer who passed your house with her infant on her back who did not receive kindness from Walter Prevost? Where was the Indian girl who could say he did not treat her with as kindly gentleness as the highest white woman in the land? He was the tree which had grown up to shelter the hut of the woodman, giving him cool shade and comfort in the days of summer and of gladness, to be cut down and burnt for fire when the winter winds are singing in the bare branches. Oh, my brother, my brother, bad is the return they make thee, and hard the measure that they deal. But shall Otaita suffer this?" she cried, rising vehemently, and casting her arms abroad. "Shall the Black Eagle let the ravens pick out the eyes of his young in his

own nest? No! my sister, no! They shall take Otaitsa's blood first. They shall shake the Blossom from the old bough that is no longer able to bear it up against the winds of heaven. If the Black Eagle can no longer protect even his daughter's husband, let him cast away the tomahawk, let him lay down the rifle, and be a woman amongst the chiefs of his people!"

It was impossible for some minutes to stop her vehement burst of passionate sorrow; but at length Edith succeeded in somewhat calming her, beseeching her to still her agitation and her anger, and to bend her whole mind to the consideration of what means could best be used to discover whither Walter had been taken, and to rescue him from the peril in which he was placed.

As soon as Otaitsa could listen, however, or rather as soon as she caught the sense of Edith's words, and appreciated their importance, it was wonderful how rapidly she became calm, how soon she stilled all the strong and struggling emotions in her heart, and directed every effort and energy of her spirit to the one great object before her. Enough of the Indian blood flowed along her veins, enough of Indian characteristics had been acquired in early youth, to give her a portion of that strong, stoical self-command which characterized the Indian warrior rather than the woman of the race. The first burst of grief showed the woman, and, perhaps, in some degree, not the pure Indian; but the moment after, those who knew the character of the Five Nations best, might have supposed her not only a pure Indian, but a man and a chief, so quietly did she reason upon and ponder the means of accomplishing her purpose. She remained, at first, for two or three minutes in perfect silence, revolving all the circumstances in her mind, and calculating every chance. But then she said: "The first thing, Edith, is for you to go back to your poor father; not that you are in any danger, but it were well, if possible, that no one knew you had been with me, at least till I have discovered where they have hid our poor

brother. The women here will all aid me, and never part their lips, if I desire them not; for though the men think they are very shrewd in hiding the secrets of the nation from their wives and daughters, the women, when they please, can be as secret and as resolute, too. At all events, whether your coming be known or not, it would be better you should go back before the chiefs return. They have gone forth to hunt, they say; but whether it be the black bear, or the brown deer, or the white man, is in great doubt, dear Edith. At all events, they will not know the object of your coming. They may suspect, and probably will, that you came to inquire for your brother; but knowing that I was ignorant of his capture, and am still ignorant of where they keep him, they will think you have gone back disappointed and in sorrow, and leave me unwatched, to act as I will."

"But can I do nothing to aid?" asked Edith. "Remember, dearest Blossom, what it is to remain inactive and ignorant while the fate of one so near and so dear hangs in the balance."

"You shall not remain in ignorance, dear Edith," replied Otaitsa. "With every possible opportunity (and I will find many) my sister shall know what the Blossom does; and if there be any way by which you could give help, you shall have instant tidings. At present I know not what is to be done to save our Walter from the power of the Snake. I know not, even, what they have decided themselves, or whether they have taken any decision; and I have much to think of, much to do. I must seek out those in whom I can place confidence; I must employ many, probably, to obtain me information; I must try some, consult with others, and judge what is to be done. You can rest here, my Edith, for this day, but to-morrow you must speed home again. But be sure of one thing—if Walter dies, Otaitsa is dead, too!"

"That is no consolation," said Edith, throwing her arms round Otaitsa's neck, with tears in her eyes. "Oh, do not

do anything rash, dear Blossom! Remember, you are a Christian; and many things are forbidden to Christians as sins which are regarded as virtues by pagan nations."

"Nothing can be rash, nothing can be a sin," answered Otaita, "which can save a life innocent, and good, and noble. I would not willingly offend my sister, but my heart is open to God, and He will judge me in mercy, seeing my motives. And now, dear sister, sit you here, and I will send you food, such as we poor Indians eat. I myself may be away for a time, for there must be no delay; but I will return as soon as possible, and you shall know all that is done before you go. Do these blacks who are with you understand the Indian tongue?"

"One of them certainly does," replied Edith; "that is to say, the language of the Mohawks."

"'Tis the same," answered Otaita, "or nearly the same. We may have altered a little, but amongst the Five Nations, he who speaks one tongue understands all. Is it the man or woman—and can we trust?"

"It is the man," answered Edith, "and I do believe he can be trusted."

"Then I go," answered Otaita, and leaving Edith, she descended to the room below, and then issued forth amongst the Indian huts, gliding from one to another, and stopping generally for a few moments at those lodges before which was to be seen a high pole bearing the ghastly trophies with which the Indians signalized the death of an enemy.

Edith, in the meanwhile, remained for some time in sad meditation, until her eyes turned toward the sketches hanging round the room. On one in particular the reflected light from the surface of the lake streamed as it passed from the window, and Edith, going near, examined it attentively. It represented the head of a young man, apparently from seven and twenty to thirty years of age, and was done well, though not exactly in a masterly manner. It was merely in pencil, but highly finished, and there seemed something in it very familiar to Edith's eye.

The features were generally like those of her brother Walter, so like that at first she imagined the drawing must be intended to represent his head; but the nearer view showed that it was that of a much older man, and the dress was one long gone out of fashion.

She was still gazing, and puzzling herself with the questions of whence these drawings could come, and whether they could be Otaitsa's own productions, when several Indian women entered, with their silent and noiseless tread, and placed some carved bowls, filled with different kinds of food, before her. It was all very simple, but she was much exhausted, for she had tasted nothing from an early hour of the day, and the refreshment was grateful to her. The women spoke to her, too, in the Iroquois tongue, and their sweet, low-toned voices, murmuring in the sort of sing-song of the tribes, was pleasant to her ear. It spoke of companionship. Their words, too, were kind and friendly, and she gathered from them that Otaitsa, in order to veil the real object of her coming, had been making inquiries as to whether anyone had seen Walter Prevost. They assured Edith that they had not seen him, that he could not have come into the Oneida country, or someone in the Castle must have heard of him. A paleface amongst them was very rare, they said, but the coming of Walter Prevost, whom so many knew and loved much, must have been noised abroad immediately. They said that his absence from his home was certainly strange, but added, laughing, that young warriors would wander, as Edith would discover when she was old enough.

Thus they sat and talked with her, lighting a lamp in a bowl, till Otaitsa returned, and then they left the two friends alone together.

Otaitsa was agitated, evidently, though she tried hard to hide, if not to suppress her emotions under Indian calmness; but her agitation was evidently joyful. She laid her lovely small hand upon Edith's and pressed it warmly.

"I have found friends," she said, "and those who will

work for me and with me. My father's sister, who knew and loved my mother, and who is supposed by some to have a charm from the Great Spirit, to make men love and reverence her; the wife of the sachem of the Bear; the young bride of the Running Deer; and the wife of the Gray Wolf, as well as the wife of Lynx Foot, and many others; all these have vowed to help me, whatever it may cost. They all know him, my sister; they all have called him brother; and they are all resolute that their brother shall not die. But I must first work for him myself, dear Edith," she continued; and then, clasping her hands together, with a burst of joy at the hope lighted up in her young, warm heart, she exclaimed: "Oh, that I could save him all by myself—that I might buy him from his bonds by my own acts alone—aye, or even by my own blood! Huah! huah! That were joyful indeed!"

Edith could hardly raise her mind to the same pitch of hope, but still she felt more satisfied. Her object was accomplished. Otaitsa was informed of Walter's danger, and the bright, enthusiastic girl was already actively engaged in the effort to deliver him. There was something, too, in the young Indian—an eagerness, an energy unusual in the depressed women of her race, probably encouraged by the fond, unbounded indulgence of the chief, her father—which seemed to breathe of hope and success; and it was impossible to look into the eager and kindling eyes, when the fancy that she could deliver her young lover all alone took possession of her, without believing that if his deliverance was within human power, she would accomplish it.

Edith felt that her duty, so far, was done toward him, and that her next duty was toward her father, who, she well knew, would be painfully anxious till she returned, however confident he might have felt of her safety in the hands of the Indians so long as there seemed no immediate chance of her being placed in such a situation. She willingly, therefore, agreed to Otaitsa's suggestion to set out with the first ray of light on the following morning, Otaitsa

promising that some Indian women should accompany her a day's journey on the way, who by their better knowledge of the country and their skill in the management of the canoe, would greatly facilitate her progress. About an hour was spent in conversation, all turning upon one subject, and then the two beautiful girls lay down to sleep in each other's arms.

CHAPTER XV

ON the very same night which was passed by Edith Prevost in the lodge of the Black Eagle, some eight or ten wild-looking savages, if they could be so called, assembled, apparently to deliberate upon a great and important question. The place they took for their meeting lay nearly twenty miles in a direct line from the Oneida Lake, and was, even in the daylight, a scene of remarkable beauty and grandeur. At the hour of their meeting, however, which was about forty minutes after the sun went down, the surrounding objects were illuminated by a different and more appropriate light. Their council fire had been kindled on the top of a large, flat mass of stone, fallen from the high rocks of a very narrow dell or pass separating a rugged and forest-bearing mountain from a spur of the same range, which seemed to have been riven off from the parent chain by some rude and terrible convulsion of nature. Forty yards, at the widest part, was the expanse of this fissure, and on either side were huge masses of rock tumbled about in chaotic confusion, and blocking up the greater part of the bottom of the dell.

About half way through the glen was the large, flat stone, a sort of natural altar, on which the Indians had lighted their fire, and strange and wild was the scene as those swarthy men, armed as if for battle, but not painted, sat around in the broad glare, each with his rifle resting on his arm, and each still and motionless as if a statue hewn out from the brown rock. Up went the towering flame from the great pile of dry wood, sending a flickering light over tree and precipice; and yet no one stirred, no one spoke for

several minutes. Each eye was fixed upon the fire, not as if watching it as an object of interest, but with the steady, thoughtful gaze which showed that the mind was busy with other things; and there was something very awful in that stone-cold silence.

At length the Black Eagle began to speak, without moving from his seat, however, at least at first. His tone, too, was low and sad, though every word, in the sharp guttural language of the Iroquois, was clear and distinct:

"For more than fifty winters," he said, "I have hovered over the land of the Oneidas, and my wing has not failed in its flight, my eyes have not been dazzled by the blaze of the sun, nor dimmed by the light of the moon. The dew has fallen upon me, and the summer's sun and the winter's snow, and still are my feathers unruffled, and my flight as strong as in my youth. I am not a woman, that I should spare, nor a child, that I should weep. Who has seen a tear in my eye, or who has seen the tomahawk uplifted not to strike? Have I asked anything of my children but to be the first in the battle? Have I ever forgiven the enemies of the children of the Stone? But we have made alliance with a great nation; we have taken presents from them; we have promised them to live with them as brothers in the time of peace, to go to battle with them as brothers in the time of war. Our children are their children, and their children are ours. Moreover, with some of this nation our chiefs have entered into more strict bonds of friendship. We have sat by their fires, we have smoked the pipe of peace together; we are their brothers. One family came and built their lodge amongst us, swept down the forest, and planted the cornfield. Their door was always open to the redman, their food was always shared with him. They said not, 'This is mine and that is thine,' but they opened their arms, and they said, 'Thou art my brother.' The children of the Stone loved them well. They were dear to the Black Eagle as his own eaglets. The mat in the house of Prevost was a pleasant rest-

ing place to his forehead when he was tired. His daughter was as my daughter, and his son as of my blood and bone. A man came to his hearth whom we all know, a good man, a friend to the redman. Should my brother Prevost refuse to the Woodchuck room to burrow for one night? He went away, and far from the house of our brother he met an Oneida of the totem of the Tortoise, a man who had robbed him, and who had a lying tongue; a snake, who hated him whom he had stung. The tomahawk was bare, and the Oneida was killed; but the man took not his scalp, he sung no song of triumph over the children of the Stone. He slew him not as an enemy, but in self-defence, otherwise he would have twisted his finger in the scalp-lock, and the Oneidas would have mourned over a disgrace. It is right that there should be blood for blood, that the man who sheds the blood of the redman should die for his act, and that if he or none of his relatives could be found, some other man of his nation should be made the sacrifice. But what have I done that the son of my brother should be taken? Have I led you so often in the battle, have I covered my war post with the scalps of your enemies, that the tree I planted should be rooted up when the forest is full of worthless saplings? Was there no other white man to be found in the land, that you must take the child of him who loved and trusted us? Had a moon passed, had a week, that you might know that there was none but the beloved of the Black Eagle whom you might use for your sacrifice? Had you made sure, even, that you could not catch the murderer himself, and take his blood in requital of the blood he shed? Is the wisdom of our people gone by, is their cunning a thing of other days, that they could not lure the man they sought into their power, that they could not hunt any other game, that they not even try to find anyone but the one we loved the best? Remember, my children, that you are not rash and hasty, like the paleface, but that you are the children of the

Stone; and though, like it, immovable and strong, you should be calm and still, likewise. I have said."

There was a pause of several minutes before anyone answered, and then a man of the middle age, not so tall as the Black Eagle by several inches, but with a particularly cunning and serpent-like look about his eyes, rose slowly from his seat, and, standing on the very point of the rock where he was placed, said in a hard, cold tone:

"The Black Eagle has spoken well. We are allies of the white man. The paleface calls us his brother. He takes our hunting grounds. He plants corn and feeds oxen amongst us. Where our foot was free to go is ours no longer; it is his. He has taken it from us and he is our brother. The Black Eagle loves the paleface. He took a paleface for his wife, and he loves all her race. He loves their religion. His daughter is of the religion of the white man. He himself has faith in their God. Their Great Spirit he adores, and he has made their medicine man his son by adoption. Is the religion of the white man the same as the religion of the children of the Stone? Is their Great Spirit our Great Spirit? No; for I have heard His words spoken, and they are not the words that we are taught. The white man's Spirit tells us that we shall not do that which our Great Spirit tells us to do. It bids men to spare their enemies and to forgive. Ours tells us to slay our enemies and to avenge. Which is the true Spirit? Ours! For the paleface does not believe in his own Spirit nor obey His commands. He does not spare his enemies, he does not forgive, but he takes vengeance as fiercely as the redman, and against his own law. Let us then obey the voice of our own Great Spirit, and do according to our own customs; for the white man knows his God to be false, or he would obey His commandments. Now, what would the Black Eagle have? Would he have us all turn Christians, or would he have us obey the voice of the Manitou, and follow the customs of our fathers? Have we not done according to our own laws? What do our traditions tell

us? They say that thou shalt appease the spirit of thy brother who is slain, by pouring out the blood of the slayer. If his blood cannot be had, then that of one of his family or of his friends. If his family and his friends are not, then that of one of his nation. So now, what is the case, chiefs and warriors of the Oneidas? You have a brother slain. His soul goes to the land of spirits, but his bow and his arrows hang idle at his back. His heart is sad and desolate. He howls for food, and finds none. He wanders round and round the happy hunting grounds, and looks in in sorrow, for he must not enter till the blood of atonement has been shed. He cries to you from the other side of the grave with a great cry, 'Give me rest!' Shall his brothers give him none? Shall they let him wander, cold and hungry, amidst frost and snows, within sight of the blessed region, and prevent him from entering, or shall we take the first man we find of the race of him who slew him, and by his blood, poured out upon this very stone, appease the spirit of our dead brother, and let him enter the happy hunting grounds, where his soul may find repose? Ye men of the family of the Snake, ye have done well to seize upon the paleface whom ye first found, for ye have made sure of an atonement for the blood of your brother; and how could ye know that ye could find it if ye delayed your hand, or abandoned your prey? And now, let the chiefs and the warriors consider whether they will still keep their brother who is dead hungering and thirsting for months in the cold region, or whether they will make the atonement this very day, and open the way for him into the happy hunting grounds? I have said."

Again a quiet silence took possession of the throng, and it lasted long; but the eyes of the Black Eagle moved hither and thither round the circle, watching every face, and when he gathered, by a sort of kindling look in the eyes of one of the warriors, that he was about to speak, he himself interposed, rising this time to his full height, and saying:

"The medicine man has spoken, and he has explained

the law; but he has counseled with words contrary to the law. The medicine man has the law in his heart, but his words are the words of foxes. He has not unfolded the roll of the law into which the words of the Manitou were whispered; but he says truly that we are to shed the blood of the murderer of our brother, to appease his spirit. If we cannot find him, we are to shed the blood of some one of his many kindred; if we cannot find one of them, the blood of one of his nation; but have ye sought for the murderer, ye brethren of the Snake? Can ye say that ye have tried to catch him? Have ye had time? Will your brother who is gone be contented with the blood of the first paleface ye can find, when ye might find the real murderer? Will he lap, like the dog, at the first pool in his way? Will he not rather say, 'Give us the sweet water that only can allay our thirst? Would ye sing in our ears, and make us believe music? This is not the blood of him who shed our blood. This is not the blood of his kindred. The happy hunting grounds will not open to us for this blood.' Oneidas, it is the medicine man beguiles you from the customs of your fathers. They say, 'Wait till ye have searched diligently. Make sure that ye offer the best atonement that ye can. Do not kill the fox because the panther has mangled the game. Do not shoot the oriole for the thing that the hawk has done. The son of my brother Prevost is no kin of the Yengee who slew the brother of the Snake. His blood will not atone if ye can find other blood more friendly to the murderer. The eyes of the Manitou are over all; he sees that ye have not sought as ye should seek."

Some moments after he had spoken, but with a less interval than had hitherto occurred between any of the speeches, a fierce-looking young warrior arose and exclaimed:

"Let him die! Why should we wait? The Woodchuck is safe in the land of the Yengees. He has taken himself far from the arrow of the Oneida. There is a cloud between us and him, and we cannot see through it. The Woodchuck

has no kindred. He has often declared so when he sat by the fire and talked of the deeds he has done. He has boasted that he was a man alone; that his father was hay and his mother grass, and the hemlock and the oak his brothers and his sisters. Neither him can we find, nor any of his kin; but we have taken what was nearest to him—his friend, and the son of his friend. This is the blood that will appease the spirit of our brother. Let him die, and die quickly. Does the Black Eagle ask if this boy was his friend? The Black Eagle knows he was; but moreover, it may be that he himself was the companion of the murderer even when he killed our brother. They went forth together to seek some prey. Was it not the redman that the wolves hunted? They killed a panther and a man when they went forth together. That we know, for there were eyes of redmen near. The blood of our brother was licked up by the earth. The skin of the panther was sent by this boy (our captive) to Otaitsa, the daughter of the Black Eagle. I took it from the runner this very day. The man who brought it is near at hand. The skin is here. I have said." And he threw the panther's skin down before him, almost into the flame of the fire.

A buzzing murmur ran round the Indians, and the keen mind of the Black Eagle soon perceived that the danger of poor Walter Prevost was greatly heightened.

"Let the law be announced to us," he said. "The roll of the law is here, but let it not be read by the tongue of a fox. Let the man of ancient times read it. Let the warrior and the priest who kept it for so many years now tell us what it ordains, according to the interpretation of the old days, and not according to the rashness of boys, who would be chiefs long before a scalp hangs at the door of their lodge. I can see," he cried, in a loud voice, starting up from his seat, and waving his arm, as if some strong emotion overpowered his habitual calmness, "I can see the time coming when the intemperance of youth and the want of respect for age and for renown will bring low the power

of the Oneidas, will crush the greatness of the Five Nations into dust. So long as age and counsel were revered they were a mighty people, and the scalps of their enemies were brought from every battlefield. They were a wise people, for they listened to the voice of experience, and they circumvented their enemies. But now the voices of boys and striplings prevail. They take presents, and they sell themselves for baubles. They drink the firewater till they are no more men, till reason has departed, and courage and strength are not in them. They use the lightning, and they play with the thunder; but the tomahawk and the scalping knife are green rushes in their hands. Let the law be announced, then; let it be announced by the voice of age and wisdom; and let us abide by his words, for they are good."

Thus saying, he stepped across the little chasm which lay between him and the second speaker on this occasion, and took up a heavy roll which lay beside the priest or medicine man. It consisted of innumerable strings of shells sawn into long strips, like the pendants of an earring, and stained of three separate colors—black, red, and white. These were disposed in various curious groups, forming no regular pattern, but yet not without order; and so many were there in this roll that, though each was very small, the weight of the whole could not have been less than twenty or thirty pounds. Thus loaded, and bearing this burden with the appearance of great reverence, Black Eagle carried the roll half way round the circle and laid it upon the knees of a man evidently far advanced in life, although his shorn head and long white scalp-lock showed to an Indian eye, at least, that he still judged himself fit to accompany the warriors of the tribe to battle.

The chief then slowly resumed his seat, and once more profound silence spread over the assembly. The eyes of all were, it is true, directed toward the old man whose exposition of their laws and customs was to be final; but not a limb stirred, and even the very eagerness of their gaze was

subdued into a look of tranquil attention, except in the case of the young man who had spoken so vehemently, and whose relationship as a brother of the slain Indian excused, in the sight of the tribe, a good deal of unwonted agitation.

For some two minutes after receiving the roll the old priest remained motionless, with his eyes raised toward the flame that still towered up before him, licking and scorching the branches of a hemlock tree above. But at length his fingers began to move amongst the carved shells, and, unloosing rapidly some thongs by which the roll was bound, he spread out the seemingly tangled mass in fair order. Then, bending down his head, he seemed to listen, as if for a voice.

"The law of the Oneidas cannot change," he said, at length. "It is the will of Hawaneyoh, the Great Spirit. A white man must die for the blood spilt by a white man; but the spiller of the blood must be sought for, or our brother will still be shut out from the happy hunting grounds. Listen not to the song of singing birds against the young man, thou brother of the Snake. Neither do thou make trouble in the Five Nations because the blossom of the Black Eagle's tree cannot be reached by thy hand."

The open allusion to that which he thought was one of the deep secrets of his bosom, was too much for even the Indian stoicism of the brother of the Snake, and he drew his blanket or mantle over his chest as if to hide what was within. Black Eagle, however, though probably taken as much by surprise as anyone by the old man's words, remained perfectly unmoved, not a change of expression even appearing upon his rigid features, though the speaker paused for a whole minute, as if to let what he had said produce its full effect.

"Remember," continued the priest, "the prophecy of the child of the sky, Tohganawetah, when our fathers, under his counsels, joined themselves together in a perpetual league, a lifetime before a paleface was seen in the land.

He said, 'When the white throats shall come, if ye suffer dissensions among yourselves, ye shall pull down the Long House of the Five Nations, cut down the tree of peace, and extinguish the council fire forever.' And wilt thou, brother of the Snake, bring this cloud upon thy people? Thou shalt search for him who spilt thy brother's blood till the moon have changed, and waxed and waned again, and then thou shalt come before the sachems of the eight totems and make manifest that thou hast not been able to find him or any of his kindred. Then shall the sachems choose a pale-face for the sacrifice, and let him die the death of a warrior by the stroke of the tomahawk; but they shall make no delay, for thy brother must not be shut out from the hunters gone before, more than two moons. Hiro! I have spoken."

"Houé, houé! It is well!" said all the Indians present but one, and, rising from their seats, they raised the roll of their law reverently, and one by one glided down the path which led to the opening of the dell.

CHAPTER XVI

SLOWLY up the steep middle street of Albany walked the great, powerful form of the Woodchuck, about the hour of noon. He was clothed in his usual shaggy habiliments of the forest, with his rifle on his shoulder, his hatchet and his knife in his belt. His steps had none of the light activity, however, of former times, and his face, which always had a grave and sedate air, was now covered with heavy gloom.

Altogether he was a very singular-looking man; but—though situated inland, and in one of the most central situations of the provinces—the streets of Albany, from time to time, presented so many strange figures of different kinds, what between Indians, negroes, half-breeds, scouts, soldiers, sailors, Dutchmen, Englishmen, and hunters, that the wanderer, however odd his appearance, attracted very little attention as he went. Slowly he found his way up to the gates of the fort, and easily obtained admission to the person he sought. He found him in a mere barrack-room, with the simplest possible furniture, and no ornament whatever to distinguish it as the dwelling of a man of distinction. The little camp bed in one corner of the room, the plain deal table, not even painted, at which he sat writing, the two or three hard wooden stools, without backs, were all such as might have been used in a camp or carried with an army without adding much to the impedimenta; and yet there was something about the young nobleman himself which instantly informed a visitor that he was in the presence of no common man. He turned his head as Woodchuck entered, and as soon as he perceived who it was, he nodded,

saying: "Immediately, immediately," and resumed his writing.

Captain Brooks drew a stool to some distance and fixed his eyes first of all upon the young soldier, seeming to examine his countenance and form with great care. He then turned to another person whom the room contained, and scanned him with great accuracy. That person was an Indian, if one might judge by complexion and features, and yet he was dressed like one of the followers of the British army. The sort of hunting tunic he wore was not the ordinary *ga-ka-ah* or Indian shirt, but a mere sort of cloth frock, with sleeves, fastened round his waist by a leathern belt. It was of a peculiar color, then very much worn both by men and women, of the hue of dead leaves, and called *philomot*; and on his head he wore a curious sort of cap of untanned leather, much of the same hue. It was certainly a well-devised dress for the purpose of concealing a wanderer through the woods in the autumn season; but as I have before said, it was assuredly not Indian, and the long hair, though black as jet, with a slight shading of moustache upon the upper lip, showed that in all probability there was some white blood in his veins, though not at all apparent on the surface. The man had much of the Indian impassible gravity, however, and though he must have seen that he was undergoing a very severe scrutiny by the eyes of Woodchuck, no movement of any of the muscles of the face betrayed his consciousness, and he remained still and statue-like, with his gaze turned earnestly forward upon Lord H——.

The young nobleman soon concluded his letter, and beckoning the man up, placed it in his hands with some money. "Take that to Mr. Prevost," he said, "and tell him, moreover, that I shall myself be up to-morrow, before night-fall."

"Stay a moment," said Woodchuck. "I may have something to say, too, that will make changes. I guess the half-breed had better wait outside a bit."

"Go down to the guard-room," said Lord H——, turning to the man, "and wait there till I send for you." Then giving an inquiring look to Woodchuck, he added: "He tells me he can reach Mr. Prevost's house this night, if he sets out at once."

"To be sure he can," answered Woodchuck. "If he's the man I believe him to be, he'd go half as fur ag'in."

The runner took not the slightest notice of the conversation regarding himself and his own powers, nor indeed of the sort of intimation of recognition uttered by Captain Brooks.

"Is not your name Proctor?" said Woodchuck, at last. "I guess it be, though your age, since I saw you——"

The other merely nodded his head, and Woodchuck continued, with a sort of grunt of satisfaction, "That'll do; he can speak, my lord, though he never do, except at very rare times. Them Ingian devils are as silent as snakes themselves, but this man beats them all. I traveled some two hundred miles with him, ten year or more ago, and never heard the sound of his voice in the whole way but once, and then he said three words and a half, and stopped."

"I know he can speak," said Lord H——, "for he told me how long he would take to go. Go down, Mr. Proctor, as I told you, and wait in the guard-room; you shall hear from me in a minute."

"He runs like a deer," said Woodchuck, as the man left the room, "but his way is generally to jog on at a darnation swinging sort of rate, which doesn't seem to trouble his shanks at all—a sort of trot, like—carries him through everything and over everything, brambles and bushes, and hills, and stones and rocks, land or water, all the same. I do believe he'd trot across the Hudson without much knowing or caring what was anything. The Indians call him Munguokah; but as his father's father was an Englishman, we call him Proctor."

"But can he be relied upon?" asked Lord H——. "He

was recommended to me very strongly by General Webb, who employed him upon some difficult service."

Woodchuck paused. "Webb's recommendation," he said, at length, "is not worth much, for what would any give for any word out of the mouth of a man who would suffer a gallant comrade to fall, and a noble garrison to be butchered, without striking one stroke or moving one step to their assistance? But, if I recollect right, this Proctor is the runner who contrived to get through Montcalm's army and all the savage devils that were with him, and carried poor Munro's dispatches to Webb. What became of the other one, nobody knows; but I guess we could find his scalp if we sought well amongst the Hurons. Yes, this must be the man, I think; and if it be, you couldn't find a better. At all events, you can trust him for holding his tongue, and that's something in a runner. He wouldn't get up words enough in ten years to tell any secrets you wanted to keep. And now, General, I've come to talk with you about what's to be done, and I think we had better settle that before the man goes. He'll get to Prevost to-night if he stays these two hours, and I guess we can settle sooner than that, for I've thought the matter over and made up my mind."

"And to what conclusion have you come?" asked Lord H—.

Brooks looked down and rubbed his great hands upon his knees for a moment, as if he hesitated to give the resolution he had formed, after so painful a struggle, the confirmation of uttered words. "Not a pleasant one," he said, at length; "not one easily hit upon, my lord, but the only one—after all, the only one. I had a sore tussle with the devil last night, and he's a strong enemy; but I beat him—manful, hand to hand. He and I together, and no one to help either of us."

The young nobleman thought that his poor friend's wits were beginning to wander a little, and to lead him back from the diabolical encounter he spoke of, he said, changing

the subject abruptly: "I suppose I could send no one better than this man Proctor?"

"I'll tell you what it is, Lord H——," answered Woodchuck, "I must go myself. There's no one can save Walter Prevost but Brooks. He's the man who must do it."

"And do you think it possible?" asked Lord H——, seeing the great probability of his companion himself being captured by the Indians, and yet hesitating whether he ought to say a word to deter him from his purpose.

"I do think it possible," said Woodchuck, with a grim smile, "for you see if these Indians get the man they want they can't and dar'n't take another."

Lord H—— grasped the rough hand of the hunter, saying in a tone of much feeling: "You are, indeed, a noble-hearted man, Captain Brooks, if I understand you rightly, to go and give yourself up to these savages to save your young friend. Nobody could venture to propose such a thing to you, because his having fallen into their hands was not your fault, and life is dear to everyone; but——"

"Stay! stay! stay!" cried Woodchuck. "Don't get along too fast! You've said two or three things already that want an answer. As to life, it is dear to everyone, and I myself am such a fool that I'd rather by a good bit go lingering on here amongst all this smoke and dirt, and dull houses, and rogues innumerable, than walk up there and be tomahawked, which is but the matter of a moment, after all; for them Ingians isn't long about their work, and do it completely. Howsoever, one always clings to hope, and so I think that if I can get up there amongst the woods and trails I know so well, I may, perhaps, find out some means of saving the poor boy and my own life, too; and if I can, I'll do it; for I'm not going to throw away my life like a bad shilling. If I can't do it, why then I'll save his life, cost what it will. I shall soon know all about it when I get up there, for the squaws are all good, kind-hearted critters, and if I can get hold of one of them she'll be my scout soon enough, and fish out the truth for me as to where the

boy is, and when they are going to make the sacrifice. Lord bless you, they set about these things, them Ingians, just as orderly as a trial at law. They'll do nothing in a hurry; and so I shall have time to look about and see what's to be done without risking Walter's life in the meanwhile. Then you see, my lord, I've got this great advantage: I shall have a walk or two in my old haunts among them beautiful woods. The snow will be out by that time; and to my mind there's no season when the woods look and the air feels so fresh and free as on a wintry day, with the ground all white, and wreaths of snow upon every vine and briar, and them great big hemlocks and pines rising up like black giants all around me. Some folks don't like the winter in the woods, but I could walk on or go on in a sleigh through them forever. Why, that month among the woods, if I'm not caught sooner, would be worth ever so many weeks in this dull, dirty place, or any other city; for Albany, I take it, is as good as most of them, and perhaps better."

"But I am afraid in the winter your plan of getting information would not succeed very well," said Lord H——. "In the first place, the Indian women are not likely to go very far from their wigwams, amongst which you would hardly venture; and in the next place, your feet would be easily tracked in the snow, for these Indians, I am told, are most cunning and pertinacious hunters, and will follow any tracks they see for miles and miles."

"I've dodged an Ingian afore now," said Captain Brooks, with a look of some self-importance, "and in the snow, too. I've got the very snowshoes I did it in. I can walk in my snowshoes either way, one as well as t'other; and so I made 'em believe that I was going east when I was going west, and going west when I was going east. Sometimes I had the shoes on the right way, and sometimes the wrong, so they couldn't make nothing of it, and they think still—for, Lord help you, they are sometimes as simple as children—that the devil must have given me a lift now and then; for when I got where the trees grew thick together, so that the

big branches touched, and I could catch a great bough over my head by a spring, I would get up and climb along from one to another, like a bear or squirrel, sometimes two or three hundred yards, before I came down again. I saw a set of them once upon the trail, and when they came to where the tracks stopped they got gaping up the tree, with their rifles in their hands, as if they were looking after a painter; but I was a hundred yards off or more, and quite away from the right line. Then, as to the women, I've thought about that, and I've laid a plan in case I can't get hold of any of the women. Now, I'm going to tell you something very strange, my lord. You've heard of Free Masons, I dare say?"

Lord H—— nodded his head, with a smile; and Woodchuck continued: "Well, they've got Free Masons among the Ingians; that's to say, not exactly Free Masons, but what comes much to the same thing,* people who have got a secret among themselves, and who are bound to help each other in good or evil, in the devil's work or God's, against their own nation or their own tribe, or their own family, and who, on account of some deviltry or other, dare not for the soul of them refuse what a brother asks them. It's a superstition at the bottom of it, and it's very strange, but so it is."

While he had been speaking he had unfastened his coat at the collar, drawn his arm out of the sleeve and bared it up above the elbow, where there appeared a small blue line tattooed on the brown skin. "There," he said; "there's the mark."

"You do not mean to say that you are one of this horrible association?" asked Lord H——, with a grave look.

"Not exactly that," answered Woodchuck; "and as to its being a horrible association or not, that's as folks use it. It may be for bad and it may be for good, and there are

* This very curious fact is avouched upon authority beyond question. The order was called that of the Honontkoh, and was generally regarded with great doubt and suspicion by the Iroquois.

good men amongst them. I am a sort of half-and-half member, and I'll tell you how it happened. I went once, in the winter, up into the woods to hunt moose, by a place where there's a warm spring, which melts the snow and keeps the grass fresh, and the big beasts come down to drink, and mayhap eat, too. Well, as soon as I got there, I saw that someone had been before me, for I saw tracks all about, and a sort of stable in the snow, made for the moose, such as hunters often make to get a number together and to shoot them down when they herd it. There were moose tracks, too, and some blood on the snow; so I thought that the Ingians had killed some and scared the rest away. I was going back by another trail when I came upon an old man, lying partly against a basswood tree, just as quiet as if he was a corpse, and I should have thought he was as dead as a statue if I hadn't seen his shining eyes move as I passed. Never a word did he say, and he'd have lain there and died outright rather than call for help. But I went up to him, and found the old critter had been poked terribly by a moose, all about his chest and shoulders. So I built up a little hut for him with boughs, and covered it over with snow, and made it quite snug and warm. I took him in and nursed him there, and as I was well stocked with provisions, parched corn, and dry meat, and such like, I shared with him. I couldn't leave the poor old critter there to die, you know, my lord, and so I stayed with him all the time, and we got a couple of deer, and fine venison steaks we had of them; and at last, at the end of five weeks, he was well enough to walk. By that time we had got quite friendly together, and I went down with him to his lodge, and spent the rest of the winter with him. I had often enough remarked a blue line tattooed upon his arm, and sometimes he would say one thing about it and sometimes another; for these Ingians be like parrots. But at last he said he would tattoo a line on my arm; and when he had done it he told me it was the best service he could render me in return for all those I had rendered him.

He said that if I ever met any of the Five Nations tattooed like that, and spoke a word which he taught me, they would help me against their own fathers. He told me something about them and about their set, but he would not tell me all. I was quite a young lad then, and the old man died the next year, for I went to see him, and found him just at the last gasp. I have heard a good deal about those people, however, since, from other Ingians, who all have a dread of them, and call them the children of the devil; so I take care not to show my devil's mark amongst them; and I have never had need to use it till now."

"How will it serve you now?" asked Lord H——, not at all liking or confiding in the support of such men.

"Well, if I can get speech of one of them, even for an instant," replied Woodchuck, "I can get together a band of the only men who will go against the superstitions of their people and help me to set the poor boy free; and they will do it, whether they be tortoises, or bears, or wolves, or snipes, or stags."

"What! what!" exclaimed Lord H——, in utter amazement. "I do not understand what you mean!"

"Only names of their totems, or tribes, my lord," answered Brooks. "These Ingians are queer people. You must not judge of them, or deal with them, as you would other men; and these are the only critturs amongst them I could get to help me, if their habits came in the way the least bit. Now, you know, though I may do something by myself, I may not be able to do all. If I am to get the boy out of the hole where they have doubtless hid him, I have to find it out first, and to make sure that we are *not* followed and overtaken afterward. I would fain save my life if I can, my lord," he continued, looking up in the face of his noble companion with a sort of appealing look. "I think a man has a right to do that if he can."

"Assuredly," replied Lord H——. "The love of life is implanted in us by God himself; and all which can be expected of us by our country or our fellow man is a readi-

ness to sacrifice it when called on to do so. But now, my good friend, I have another plan to propose. It is probable that hostilities have ceased for this year, and since I saw you last night a small party of the scouts which you know we always have in pay, has been put at my disposal for the very purpose we have in view. They are all acquainted with wood warfare, with Indian habits, and with the art of tracking an enemy or a friend. Would it not be better for you to have these six men with you, to give you assistance in case of need? Your own life, at all events, would be more secure."

"I think not," answered Woodchuck, musingly; "they might cumber me. No, my lord, I had better go alone. As for my own life, I may as well tell you at once, I have made up my mind to save the boy or lose it. The devil put it hard to me that it was no fault of mine he was trapped; that my life was as good to me as his was to him, and a great deal more; but, knowing it does not do to stand parleying with that gentleman, I said: 'Peter Brooks, it is your fault; for if you had not shot the Indian, Walter would never have been taken. Your life is not as good to you or anybody else as his is to him and all the world. He's quite a lad, and a young lad, too, with many a bright year before him. You'll never see forty-eight again; and what's your fag-end worth to anyone?' 'Not a stiver,' answered conscience; and so I resolved to go. Now, as to these men, some of them are capital good fellows, and might help me a good deal when once I'm in the thick of the business; but seven men can't get altogether into the Oneida country without being found out. But I'll tell you what, my lord, if you'll let me place them where I want, one by one, in different places, and they slip into the country quietly, one at a time, they may do good service, and not be discovered."

"Will it not be dangerous so to divide your force?" asked Lord H——.

"Indian ways with Indian people," answered Woodchuck.

"But I don't think you understand the thing, my lord. You see, through a great part of this Ingian territory, we English have built a little fort here, and a little fort there, all the way up to the shores of Ontario, where they made sad work of it last year at Oswego. Well, if I stow away these scouts at different posts, the nearest I can to Oneida Creek, they will be only at arm's length, and can stretch out their hand to help whenever they're called upon. They'll be able to get in one by one, too, quite easily, for I've a great notion some of these Ingians have got a spite at Walter, and are not very likely to look for anyone in his place. If they caught me, they'd be obliged to have me; and if the scouts went all together, they'd stop them, for they don't like their number; but one at a time they'll pass well enough, if they understand their business, which is to be supposed."

"I see your plan now," said Lord H——, "and perhaps you are right. You can concentrate them upon any point very rapidly. They shall be sent for, and put under your command this very day."

"No need of command," answered Woodchuck; "scouts don't like to be commanded; and if they don't help with a good will, better not help at all. Just tell them what I'm about, let them know that a young man's life is at stake, and they'll work well for me if they're worth a penny. And now, my lord, you call up that man Proctor and send him off to Prevost's house. Call him up here! call him up here! I've got this large powder horn I want to send back, though it's a doubt whether the man can muster words enough to tell who it comes from, and I must get him to do so, one way or another."

"I can take it to-morrow myself," said Lord H——; but Woodchuck shook his head.

"That won't do," he said, with a shrewd look. "The runner must take it. He'll tell Prevost before some of his negroes, and the negroes will tell any Ingians that are prowling about; and so it will get round that I've left the

hunting grounds for good, and I shall slip in the more easily. Always think of everything you can; and if you can't do that, think of as much as possible. A hunter's life makes one mighty cautious. I'm as careful as an old raccoon, who always looks nine ways before he puts his nose out of his hole."

Lord H—— called up the runner; and into his hands was delivered the powder horn for Mr. Prevost, with Woodchuck's message repeated over and over again, with manifold injunctions not to forget it.

"Tell him I took it that unlucky day I shot the Ingian," said Woodchuck, "and I don't like to keep what's not my own. It's nearly as good as stealing, if not quite. There, Mr. Proctor, you can get up words enough to say that, can't you?"

The man nodded his head and then turned to the door, without any further reply, beginning his peculiar sort of trot before he reached the top of the stairs, and never ceasing it till he arrived at the door of Mr. Prevost's house.

In the meanwhile, Lord H—— made Captain Brooks stay to partake of his own very frugal dinner, while the scouts were being collected and brought to the fort. They came about two o'clock, ready prepared, at least in part, for what was to follow; for in the little town of Albany, such an adventure as had befallen Walter Prevost was a matter of too much interest not to spread to every house, and to be told at every fireside. Most of the men, accustomed to continual action and enterprise of various kinds, were very willing to go, with the prospect of a fair reward before them. Life was so often periled with them, dangers and difficulties so often encountered, that existence without activity was rather a burden than otherwise. Each probably had his selfishness of some kind; but only one, in whom it took the form of covetousness, thought fit to inquire what was to be his recompense beyond the mere pay, for this uncovenanted service.

"Your recompense will be nothing at all," answered

Woodchuck at once, without waiting for Lord H—— to speak; "I won't have you with me. The man who can try to drive a bargain when a brave boy's life is at stake is not fit to have a share with us. There, go along and knit petticoats; you may get a dollar apiece for them. That's the sort of winter work fit for you."

The man shrunk sullenly out of the room, and all other matters were soon settled with his companions. The method of their entrance into the Oneida territory, the different routes they were to take, and the points where they were to halt till called upon, were all arranged by Woodchuck, with a sort of natural military skill, which was more than once displayed by the American people during after wars. The part of the nobleman who was present was merely to listen, and give some letters to officers commanding different posts; but he listened, well pleased, and attentively; for his was a mind always eager to acquire information and direction from the experience of others, and the insight which he gained into the habits of the new people amongst whom he was might have been highly serviceable to others as well as himself, had not a sort of pedantry prevailed amongst the older officers in the British army at that time, and for many succeeding years, which prevented them from adapting their tactics to the new situations in which they were placed. Wolfe was a splendid exception, but Wolfe was a young man, coming in the dawning of a better day; and even had he not been so, it is probable that his genius, like that of Wellington, would have shown him that he was now to make rules, rather than to observe them.

As soon as the scouts were gone, Woodchuck rose to take his leave; and as Lord H—— shook him very warmly by the hand the good man said, in a tone of strong feeling: "Thank you, my lord, for all your kindness. You'll be glad to know that I feel very happy, and I'll tell you why. I'm doing something, and I'm doing my duty."

CHAPTER XVII

"THERE is a light, sir, at the Castle," said one of the servants of Sir William Johnson, entering the room where he was seated with Mr. Prevost; "it comes from the great court."

"Then they have arrived," said the officer, turning to his guest. "Let us set out at once. Are the horses saddled?"

"They have been kept ready, sir, ever since the morning," replied the servant to whom the last words were addressed.

"It is strange," said Mr. Prevost, as he followed his host toward the door of the room, "that the negro I sent to tell Edith the cause of my delay has not returned, as I told him. He might have been here four hours ago. I am growing somewhat anxious."

"Be not so! be not so!" replied Sir William. "Two or three years of forest life, my good friend, are not enough to inure a man to all the little accidents and discomforts he must meet with; and the first serious danger so shakes his nerves that they vibrate at a trifle. The man's horse may have fallen, or he may have purloined a bottle of brandy and got drunk, or he may have missed his way, or set out late. Between this house and yours there is room for chances enough to make a moderate volume. Let us not look out for uncertain evils when there are real ones enough around us."

"Real ones enough, indeed," said Mr. Prevost, with a deep sigh.

A moment after, they reached the front of the stables, from which their horses were immediately brought forth;

and mounting, they set out, followed by a small party, both on horseback and on foot; for Sir William, though he affected the simplicity of the Indian, was not at all averse to a little appearance of state and dignity in his dealings with his red allies. There is a certain sort of pride, which clothes itself in humility, and, without at all meaning to assert that the very remarkable man in question desired to make the Indian chiefs feel that his adoption of their manners was a condescension, yet it is certain that, from time to time, he judged it expedient—perhaps from motives of good policy—to make a somewhat ostentatious display of power and authority.

The night was exceedingly dark. The moon now rose at a very late hour, and dim clouds hid the stars from the dwellers upon earth. In such a night, and in such circumstances, the fancy, even of the most stout-hearted, is apt to indulge in deceits; and as the eye of Mr. Prevost wandered round, dim forms, like specters, seemed to be gliding about the fields of maize, cut, but in many places not gathered.

Not feeling certain whether imagination cheated him or not, he made no observation; and for some time Sir William Johnson was silent, also; but at length the latter said, in a commonplace tone: "Our good friends seem to have come in great force, probably in consequence of the urgency of my summons. Now, be patient, Prevost, and bear with their cool, phlegmatic ways, for these people often feel the strongest sympathies, and serve their friends the best when they seem the most cold and indifferent."

Mr. Prevost felt already how difficult it was to maintain that equanimity which, in theory, he estimated as highly as an Indian, and in practice strove for, but not infrequently lost. He promised, however, to leave entirely to Sir William Johnson the management of a conference with the chiefs of the Mohawk and Onondaga nations, which had been proposed by that officer himself, for the purpose of inducing the two most powerful nations of the

Iroquois to interfere in behalf of Walter, and save him from the fate that menaced him. At the gate of the Castle, the door of which stood open, as usual (for although it was filled with large quantities of those stores which the Indians most coveted, its safety was left entirely to the guardianship of their good faith), the two gentlemen entered the large courtyard, which, on this occasion, was quite deserted, the weather being cold enough now to render some shelter agreeable even to an Indian.

From the open door of the great hall which stretched along the greater part of the whole building, came forth a blaze of light on entering. Sir William Johnson and his companion found a number of Mohawk and Onondaga chiefs assembled, sitting gravely ranged in a semi-circle round the fire. Each was fully clothed in his garb of ceremony, and bright and brilliant were the colors displayed in the dresses and ornaments of the redmen; but as this was a peaceful occasion, their faces were destitute of paint, and the scalp-lock concealed under the brilliant gostoweh, or cap, in many of which were seen the plume of the famous white egret, used to distinguish the chiefs of the different tribes, ever since the feathers of the famous white bird of heaven had been exhausted.

All rose with quiet native dignity when the Indian agent and his companion entered; and a murmur of gratulation ran round while Sir William and Walter's father seated themselves in two large chairs.

"This is our brother," said Sir William Johnson, pointing to Mr. Prevost.

"Hai! hai!" said the Indian chiefs. "Peace! peace! He is our brother."

King Hendrick then approached Mr. Prevost, dressed in his sky-blue coat of European manufacture, presented to him by the reigning monarch of England, and took his hand, saying in a tone of friendly sympathy, and in the English tongue: "Our brother is sad; be comforted."

He then seated himself, and the attotarho, or grand chief

of the whole confederacy, an office held in descent by the chief of the Onondaga totem of the Bear, advanced to Walter's father and spoke the same words in Iroquois, showing clearly that the object of the meeting was understood by the Indian leaders. When all had arranged themselves round again, a silence of some minutes succeeded.

At length the attotarho said, rising to his full height, which might be termed almost gigantic: "Our father has sent for us, and we are obedient children. We are here to hear his sweet words and understand his mind."

Sir William Johnson then, in a speech of very great power and beauty, full of the figurative language of the Indians, related the events which had occurred in the family of Mr. Prevost, and made an appeal to his hearers for counsel and assistance. He represented his friend as an old tree from which a branch had been torn by the lightning, when he strove to depict his desolate state; and then he told a story of a panther, one of whose young ones had been carried off by a wolf, but who, on applying for assistance to a bear and a stag, recovered her young by their means. "The panther was strong enough," he said, "with the aid of the lion, to take back her young ones from the wolf, and to tear it to pieces; but the wolf was of kin to the bear and the stag, and therefore she forebore."

"But the bear is slow, and the stag is not strong when he goes against his kindred," said the attotarho, significantly, "and the lion will never take the warpath against his allies."

"Heaven forbid that there should be need," said Sir William, "but the lion must consider his children, and the panther is his son."

Poor Mr. Prevost remained in a state of painful anxiety while the discussion proceeded in this course, wandering as it seemed to him, round the subject, and affording no indication of any intention on the parts of the chiefs to give him assistance; for figures, though they be very useful things to express the meaning of a speaker, are sometimes

equally useful to conceal it. At length he could bear no longer, and forgetting his promise to Sir William Johnson, he started up with all the feelings of a father strong in his heart, and appealed directly to the Indians in their own tongue, which he had completely mastered, but in a style of eloquence very different from their own, and perhaps the more striking to them on that account.

“My child!” he exclaimed, earnestly. “Give me back my child! Who is the man amongst the Five Nations whom he has wronged? Where is the man to whom he has refused kindness or assistance? When has his door been shut against the wandering redman? When has he denied to him a share of his food or of his fire? Is he not your brother, and the son of your brother? Have we not smoked the pipe of peace together, and has that peace ever been violated by us? I came within the walls of your Long House, trusting to the truth and the hospitality of the Five Nations. I built my lodge amongst you, in full confidence of your faith and of your friendship. Is my hearth to be left desolate, is my heart to be torn out, because I trusted to the truth and honor of the Mohawks, to the protection and promises of the Onondaga, because I would not believe the songs of the singing bird that said, ‘They will slay thy children before thy face?’ If there be fault or failing in me or mine toward the redman in any of the tribes, if we have taken aught from him, if we have spoken false words in his ear, if we have refused him aught that he had a right to ask, if we have shed any man’s blood, then slay me! Cut down the old tree at the root, but leave the sapling. If we have been just and righteous toward you, if we have been friendly and hospitable, if we have been true and faithful, if we have shed no man’s blood and taken no man’s goods, then give me back my child! To you, chiefs of the Five Nations, I raise my voice; from you I demand my son! For a crime committed by one of the league is a crime committed by all. Could ye find none but the son of your brother to slay? Must ye make the trust he

placed in you the means of his destruction? Had he doubted your hospitality, had he not confided in your faith, had he said, 'The lightning of the guns of Albany and the thunder of her cannon are better protection than the faith and truth of the redman,' ye know he would have been safe. But he said, 'I will put my trust in the hospitality of the Five Nations; I will become their brother. If there be bad men amongst them, their chiefs will protect me, their attotarho will do me justice. They are great warriors, but they are good men. They smite their enemies, but they love their friends.' If, then, ye are good men, if ye are great warriors, if ye are brothers to your brothers, if ye are true to your friends, if ye are fathers yourselves, give me back my son!"

"Koui! koui!" cried the Indians in a sad tone, more profoundly affected by the vehement expression of a father's feelings than Sir William Johnson had expected; but the moment that the word was uttered, which, according to the tone and rapidity with which it is pronounced, signifies either approbation and joy, or sympathy and grief, they relapsed into deep silence again.

Sir William Johnson, though he had been a good deal annoyed and alarmed at Mr. Prevost taking upon himself to speak, and fearful lest he should injure his own cause, now fully appreciated the effect produced, and would not add a word to impair it; but at length King Hendrick rose, and said in a grave and melancholy tone: "We are brothers, but what can we do? The Oneidas are our brethren, also. The Mohawks, the Oneidas, the Onondagas, the Cayugas, and the Senecas are separate nations, though they are brethren and allies. We are leagued together for common defence, but not that we should rule over each other. The Oneidas have their laws, and they execute them; but this law is common to all the nations, that if a man's blood be shed except in battle, the man who shed it must die. If he cannot be found, any of his nearest kin must be taken. If he have none, one of his tribe or race. The same is it

with the Mohawk as with the Oneida. But in this thing have the Oneidas done as the Mohawks would not have done. They have not sought diligently for the slayer; neither have they waited patiently to see whether they could find any of his kindred. The Oneidas have been hasty. They have taken the first man they could find. They have been fearful like the squirrel, and they keep him lest in time of need they should not find another. This is unjust. They should have first waited and searched diligently, and should not have taken the son of their brother till they were sure no other man could be found. But koui! koui! what is to be done? Shall the Mohawk unbury the hatchet against the Oneida? That cannot be. Shall the Mohawk say to the Oneida, 'Thou art unjust'? The Oneida will answer, 'We have our laws and you have yours; the Mohawk is not the ruler of the Oneida; repose under your own tree; we sit upon a stone.' One thing, perchance, may be done," and a very slight look of cunning intelligence came into his face; "subtlety will sometimes do what force cannot. The snake is as powerful as the panther. I speak my thought, and I know not if it be good. Were my brother the attotarho to choose ten of the subtlest serpents of his nation, and I to choose ten of the subtlest of mine, they might go, unpainted and unarmed, and, creeping through the wood without rattle or hiss, reach the place where the young man lies. If there be thongs upon his hands the breath of a Snake can melt them. If there be a door upon his prison, the eyes of a Snake can pierce it. If there be a guard, the coil of the Snake can twine around him, and many of the Oneida chiefs and warriors will rejoice that they are thus friendly forced to do right, and seek another. I speak my thought; I know not whether it is good. Let those speak who know, for no nation of the five can do aught against another nation alone; otherwise we break to pieces like a faggot when the thong bursts."

Thus saying, he ended, sat down, and resumed his quiet stillness; and after a pause, as if for thought, the attotarho

rose, addressing himself direct to Mr. Prevost, and speaking with a great deal of grave dignity.

"We grieve for you, my brother," he said, "and we grieve for ourselves. We know that our great English father who sits under the mighty pine tree will be wroth with his red children; but let him remember and speak it in his ears, that the Mohawk and the Onondaga, the Seneca and the Cayuga, are not to blame for this act. They say the Oneidas have done hastily, and they will consult together around the council fire how thou mayest best be comforted. Haste is only fit for children. Grown men are slow and deliberate. Why should we go quickly now? Thy son is safe; for the Oneidas cannot, according to their law, take any sacrifice except the life of the slayer, till they be well assured that the slayer cannot be found."

Mr. Prevost's lip quivered with emotion as if about to speak, but Sir William Johnson laid his hand upon his arm, saying in a quick whisper, "Leave him to me;" and the Onondaga proceeded. "We will do the best that we can for our brother, but the meadow lark has not the strength of the eagle, nor the fox of the panther, and if we should fail it would not be the fault of the Mohawk or the Onondaga. I have said."

Sir William Johnson then rose to reply, seeing that the attotarho sought to escape any distinct promise, and judging that with the support of King Hendrick a little firmness might wring something more from him.

"My brother, the attotarho," he said, "has spoken well. The Five Nations are leagued together in peace and in war. They take the scalps of their enemies as one man. They live in brotherhood; but my brother says that if the Oneida commits a crime the Mohawk and the Onondaga, the Seneca and the Cayuga are not guilty of the act, and therefore deserve no wrath. But he says at the same time that if the man named Woodchuck slays a redman, Walter Prevost, the brother of the redman, must die for it. How is this? Have the children of the Five Nations forked tongues? Do

they speak double words? If the Onondagas are not guilty of what the Oneidas do, neither is Walter Prevost guilty of what the paleface Woodchuck does. May the Great Spirit forbid that your father near the rising of the sun should deal unjustly with his red children, or be wroth with them for acts done by others; but he does expect that his children of the Five Nations will show the same justice to his paleface children; and unless they are resolved to take upon themselves the act of the Oneidas, and say their act is our act, they will do something to prevent it. My brother says that haste is for children, and true are his words. Then why have the Oneidas done this hasty thing? We cannot trust that they will not be children any more, or that having done this thing they will not hastily do worse. True, everything should be done deliberately. We should show ourselves men, if we want children to follow our example. Let us take counsel then, fully, while we are here together. The council fire burns in the midst of us, and we have time enough to take thought calmly. Here I will sit till I know that my brothers will do justice in this matter, and not suffer the son of my brother to remain in the hands of those who have wrongfully made him a prisoner. Yes, truly, here I will sit to take counsel with the chiefs till the words of wisdom are spoken, even although the sun should go five times round the earth before our talk were ended. Have I spoken well?"

"Koui! koui!" exclaimed a number of voices, and one of the old sachems rose, saying in slow and deliberate tones: "Our white brother has the words of truth and resolution. The Oneida has shown the speed of the deer, but not the wisdom of the tortoise. The law of the Oneida is our law, and he should have waited at least one moon to see if the right man could be found. The Oneida must be in trouble at his own hastiness. Let us deliver him from the pit into which he has fallen, but let us do it with the silent wisdom of the snake, which creeps through the grass where no one sees him. The rattlesnake is the most foolish of reptiles,

for he talks of what he is going to do beforehand. We will be more wise than he is, and as our thoughts are good, we will keep them for ourselves. Let us only say, 'The boy shall be delivered, if the Mohawks and the Onondagas can do it; but let us not say how; for a man who gives away a secret deprives himself of what he can never recover, and benefits nothing but the wind. I have said.'

All the assembled chiefs expressed their approbation of the old man's words, and seemed to consider the discussion concluded. Mr. Prevost, indeed, was anxious to have something more definite, but Sir William Johnson nodded his head significantly, saying in a low tone: "We have done as much, nay, more than we could expect. It will be necessary to close our conference with some gifts, which will be, as it were, a seal upon our covenant."

"But have they entered into any covenant?" rejoined Mr. Prevost. "I have heard of none made yet on their part."

"As much as Indians ever do," answered Sir William Johnson, "and you can extract nothing more from them with your utmost skill."

He then called some of his people from without into the hall, ordered the stores to be opened, and brought forth some pieces of scarlet cloth, one of the most honorable presents which could be offered to an Indian chief. A certain portion was cut off for each, and received with grave satisfaction. Mats and skins were then spread upon the floor in great abundance. Long pipes were brought in and handed round, and after having smoked together in profound silence for nearly half an hour, the chiefs stretched themselves out upon the ground and composed themselves to rest.

Sir William Johnson and his guest, as a mark of confidence and brotherhood, remained with them throughout the night, but retired to the farther end of the hall. They did not sleep as soon as their dusky companions. Their conversation, though carried on in low tones, was, neverthe-

less, eager and anxious, for the father could not help still feeling great apprehensions regarding the fate of his son; and Sir William Johnson was not altogether without alarm regarding the consequences of the very determination to which he had brought the chiefs of the Mohawks and Onondagas. Symptoms of intestine discord had of late been perceived in the great Indian confederacy. They had not acted on the behalf of England with the unanimity which they had displayed in former years, and it was the policy of the British government by every means to heal all divisions and consolidate their union, as well as to attach them more and more firmly to the English cause. Although he doubted not that whatever was done by the chiefs with whom he had just been in conference would be effected with the utmost subtlety and secrecy, yet there was still the danger of producing a conflict between them and the Oneidas in the attempt, or causing angry feeling, even if it were successful; and Sir William, who was not at all insensible to his government's approbation, felt some alarm at the prospect before him. However, he and Mr. Prevost both slept, at length, and the following morning saw the chiefs dispersing in the gray dawn of a cold and threatening morning.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE snow was falling fast, the early snow of northern America. Otaita stole forth from the shelter of the great lodge, passed amongst the huts around, and out into the fields through the opening in the palisade. She was going where she wished not her steps to be traced, and she knew that the fast falling snow would speedily fill up every footprint. Quietly and gracefully she glided on till she reached the edge of the deep wood, and then along a little frequented trail, till, at the distance of about half a mile, her eyes, keenly bent forward, perceived something brown, crouching, still and motionless, under cover of a young hemlock, the branches of which nearly swept the ground. As the Blossom approached, a head, covered with glossy black hair rolled up behind, was raised above a little bush which partly hid the woman's figure; and, coming nearer, the girl asked, in a low voice, "Did he pass?"

"No," answered the young maiden to whom she spoke. "It was Apukwa, the medicine man."

Otaita waved her head sadly to and fro, saying, "Now I understand;" and then, speaking to the girl again, she said: "Now back to the Castle, through the bush, then to the other trail, and then home."

Her own walk was to be longer; and on she went, with the same gliding step, till, about half a mile farther, she turned a little out of the path to the right, and there, concealed amongst the bushes, she found an old woman of her tribe, to whom she put the same question, and received nearly the same answer.

"Thou art cold, my mother," said Otaita, unfastening

her mantle, and throwing it over the old woman. "Get thee back with the step of a mole, through the most covered ways thou canst find. How far on is the other?"

"More than an hour," replied the woman, "close at the foot of the rocks."

Otaitsa made no reply, but hastened forward to a spot where some abrupt but not very elevated crags rose up out of the midst of the wood. For a moment there seemed no one there; and the trail at that spot divided into two, one running to the right and the other to the left, at the very base of the rocks. Otaitisa gazed cautiously around. She did not dare to utter a sound; but at length her eye fell upon a large mass of stone, tumbled from the bank above, crested and feathered with some sapling chestnuts. It seemed a place fit for concealment, and advancing over some broken fragments, she was approaching carefully, when again a head was raised and a hand stretched out, beckoning to her.

Still she trod her way cautiously, taking care not to set her foot on prominent points, where the trace might remain, and contriving, as far as possible, to make each bush and scattered tree a screen. At length she reached her companion's place of concealment, and crouched down behind the rock by the side of a beautiful young woman a few years older than herself.

"Has he passed?" asked Otaitisa. "Which way did he take?"

"To the east," replied the other; "to the rising sun; but it was not the brother of the Snake. It was Apukwa the Bulrush, and he had a wallet with him, but no tomahawk."

"How long is it since he passed?" asked the Blossom, in the same low tone which they had hitherto used.

"While the crow could fly out of sight," answered the young woman. "Has my husband yet come back?"

"Not so," replied Otaitisa. "But let us both go, for thou art weary for thy home, my sister, and I am now satisfied. Their secret is mine."

"How so?" inquired the other. "Canst thou see through the rock with thy bright eyes, Blossom?"

"The cunning medicine man goes not to pray to his Manito," answered Otaita, "nor to converse with his Hawenneyo. Neither does he wander forth to fulfil his fasts in the solitude to the east. Yet he will find no dry deer's flesh there, my sister, nor any of the firewater he loves so well. But away there, where I have gathered many a strawberry when I was young, there is a deep rift in the rock, where you may walk a hundred paces on flat ground, with the high cliffs all around you. The wildcat cannot spring up, and the deer winks as he looks down. It has but a narrow entrance, for the jaws of the rock are half open; and I know now where they have hid my brother. That is enough, for this night, to Otaita."

"And what wilt thou do next?" asked her companion.

"Nay, I know not," answered the Blossom. "The sky grows darker; the night is coming on, and we must follow the setting sun if we would not have Apukwa see us. We have yet time, for the gloomy place he goes to is two thousand paces farther. Come. Be assured, dear sister, I will call for thy aid when it is needful, and thou wilt as soon refuse it as the flower refuses honey to the bee. Step carefully in the low places, that they see not the tracks of thy little feet."

Thus saying, Otaita led the way from their place of concealment with a freer air, for she knew that Apukwa had far to go, but with as cautious a tread as ever, lest returning before the sun had fully fallen, he should see the footprints in the snow.

They had been gone some ten minutes when, creeping silently down along the trail from the east, the medicine man appeared at the farthest corner of the rock, within sight; but he was not alone. The Indian whom they called the brother of the Snake was with him. The latter, however, remained at the point where he could see both ways, while Apukwa came swiftly forward. At the spot where

the trail separated he paused and looked earnestly down upon the ground, bending his head almost to his knees. Then he seemed to track something along the trail toward the Indian Castle; and then, turning back, walked slowly up to the rock, following exactly the path by which the two women had returned. At length he seemed satisfied, and quickening his pace he rejoined his companion. "Thou art right, brother," he said. "There were two. What dimmed thine eyes, that thou canst not tell who they were?"

"I was far," answered the other, "and there is shadow upon shadow."

"Was not one Otaitsa?" asked the medicine man, slowly. "Could the brother of the Snake fail to know the Blossom he loves to look at?"

"If my eyes were not hidden, it was not she," replied his companion. "Never did I see the great sachem's daughter go out, even when the sun has most fire, without her mantle round her. This woman had none."

"Which woman?" asked Apukwa. "Thou saidst there were two."

"One came, two went," replied the other Oneida, "but the second could not be the Blossom, for she was tall. The other might have been, but she had no mantle, and seemed less than Black Eagle's daughter—more like Roya, the daughter of the Bear. What were the prints of the moc-casins?"

"The snow falls fast, and covers up men's steps, as time covers the traditions of our fathers," said the medicine man. "They were not clear, brother. One was bigger than the other, but that was all I could see. Yet I scented the Blossom in this thing, my brother. The worshipper of the God of the palefaces would save the life of the paleface had he made milk of the blood of her brother. She may love the boy too well, as her father loved the white woman. She has been often there, at the lodge of Prevost, with the paleface priest or her father—very often—and

she has stayed long. That trail she likes to follow better than any other, and the Black Eagle may think that his Blossom is a flower fit to grow by the lodge of the Yengees and too beautiful for the redman. Has not my brother dreamed such dreams? Has not his Manito whispered to him such things?"

"He has," answered the brother of the Snake, in a tone of stern meaning, "and my tomahawk is sharp; but we must take counsel on this with our brethren, to make sure that there be no double tongues amongst us. How else should these women see our tracks, when we have covered them with leaves?"

It is probable that this last expression was used figuratively, not actually to imply that a precaution very common among Indians had been taken in this case, but that every care had been used to prevent a discovery by the women of the nation of any part of the proceedings in regard to Walter Prevost.

"My tongue is single," said the brother of the Snake, "and if I had a double tongue, would I use it when my enemy is under my scalping-knife? Besides, am I not more than thy brother?" and, baring his arm, he pointed with his finger to that small blue stripe which Woodchuck had exhibited on his own arm to Lord H—— in Albany.

"My brother hears with the ears of the hare," said Apuk-wa. "The Honontkoh never betray each other. But there are young men with us who are not of our order. Some are husbands, some are lovers; and with women they are women. Yet we must be watchful not to scatter our own herd. There must be no word of anger; but our guard must be made more sure. Go thou home to thine own lodge, and to-morrow, while the east is still white, let us hold council in the wigwam farther down the lake. The home wind is blowing strong, and there will be more snow to cover our trail."

Thus saying, they parted for the night. But the next morning, early, from one of the small fortified villages of

the Indians, some miles from their great Castle, no less than six young men set out at different times and took their way separately through the woods. One said to his wife, as he left her, "I go to hunt the moose;" and one to his sister, "I go to kill the deer."

An older man told his squaw the same story, but she laughed, and answered: "Thou art careful of thy goods, my husband. Truth is too good a thing to be used on all occasions. Thou keepest it for the time of need."

The man smiled, and stroked her cheek, saying: "Keep thine own counsel, wife, and when I lie to thee seem not to know it."

CHAPTER XIX

IN the chain of low cliffs which run at the distance of some four or five miles from the Oneida village, and to which, probably, at one time, the waters of the lake had extended, was a deep cleft or fissure in the hard rock, some fourteen or fifteen yards in width at its widest part, and narrower at the mouth than in the interior. One of the rocks, at the time I speak of—though large masses have fallen since, and a good deal altered the features of the scene—one of the rocks near the entrance at the time I speak of beetled considerably over its base, and projected so far as almost to touch the opposite crag, giving the mouth of the fissure somewhat the appearance of a cave. On either side the walls of this gloomy dell were perpendicular, in some places even overhanging; and at the end, where it might have been expected to slope gradually away to the upland, the general character of the scene was merely diversified by a break, or step, some fifteen or sixteen feet from the ground, dividing the face of the crag into two nearly equal parts. Beneath this ledge was a hollow of some four or five feet in depth, rendering ascent from that side impracticable.

Underneath that ledge, at the time referred to, had been hastily constructed a small hut, or Indian lodge, formed of stakes driven into the ground, and covered over skilfully enough with bark branches and other materials of the forest. A door had apparently been brought for it from some distance, for it was evidently old, and had some strange figures painted on it in red; and across this door was fixed a great bar, which would, indeed, have been very useless,

had not the stakes forming the walls of the hut been placed close together, rendering it in reality much stronger than an ordinary Indian lodge.

On the day after Otaitsa's expedition, mentioned in the preceding chapter, some sixteen or eighteen Oneidas of different ages, but none of them far advanced in life, gathered round the mouth of the cliff and conversed together for several minutes in low tones, and with their usual slow and deliberate manner. At the end of their conference one seated himself on a stone near the entrance, two advanced into the chasm, and the rest dispersed themselves in different directions through the woods. The two who advanced approached the hut, following each other so close that the foot of each trod in the step of the other; and when they reached it the foremost took down the bar and opened the door, suffering the light to enter the dark chamber within. The sight which that light displayed was a very painful one.

There, seated on the ground, with his head almost bent down to his knees, his beautiful brown hair falling wild and shaggy over his face, his dress soiled and in some parts torn, and his hands thin and sallow, sat poor Walter Prevost, the image of despair. All the bright energies of his eager, impetuous nature seemed quelled; the look of youthful, happy enjoyment was altogether gone, and with it the warm hopes and glowing aspirations, the dreams of future happiness or greatness, of love, and joy, and tenderness. The sunshine had departed; the motes of existence no longer danced in the beam.

He lifted not his head when the Indians entered; still and impassive as themselves, he sat without movement or word; the very senses seemed dead in the living tomb where they had confined him; but the sight touched them with no pity.

Gazing at him with a curious, cunning, serpent-like look, Apukwa placed before him the wallet which he carried, containing some dried deer's flesh and parched Indian corn;

and, after having watched him for a moment without a change of countenance, said in a cold tone: "There is food. Take it and eat."

As if the sound of his hated voice had startled the youth from a death-like sleep, Walter sprang suddenly on his feet, exclaiming: "Why should I eat to prolong my misery? Slay me! Take thy tomahawk and dash my brains out! Put an end to this torment, the most terrible that thy fiend-like race have ever devised."

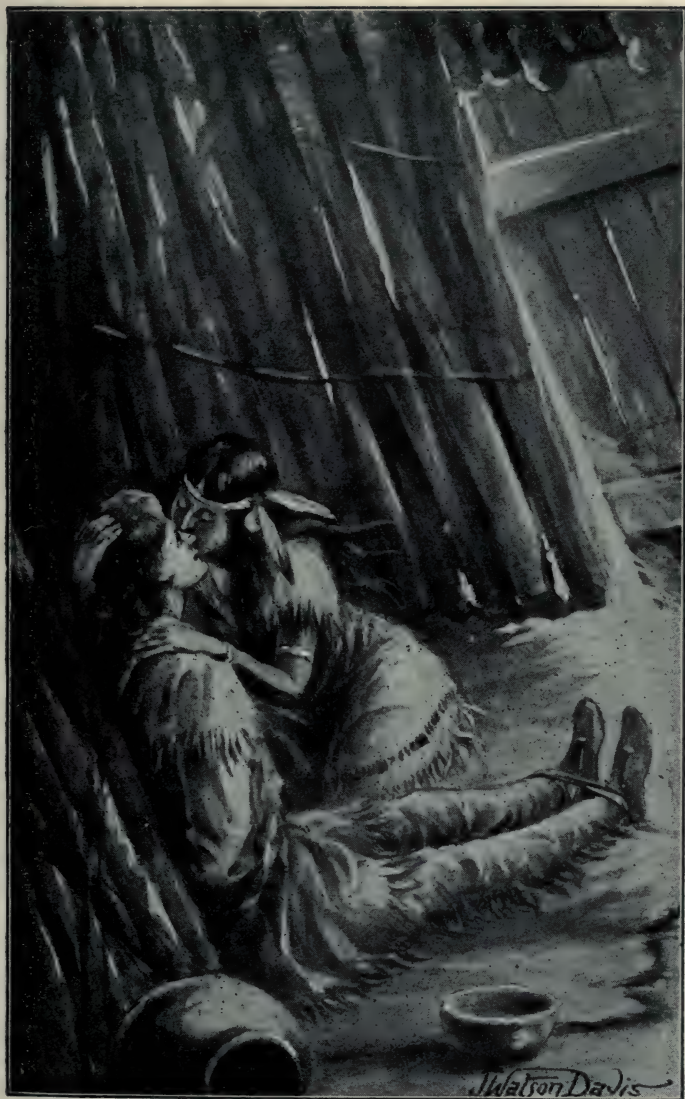
The two Indians laughed with a low, quiet, satisfied laugh. "We cannot slay thee," said the brother of the Snake, "till we know that thy paleface brother who killed our brother cannot be found to take thy place."

"He is far beyond your power," cried Walter, vehemently. "He will never be within your grasp. I helped him to escape. I delivered him from you! Slay me! slay me! Dogs of Indians, your hearts are wolves' hearts! You are not men; you are women, who dare not use a tomahawk! You are the scoff of your enemies! They laugh at the Oneidas, they spit at them! They say they are children, who dare not kill an enemy till the old men say kill him! They fear the rod of their chief. They are like hares and rabbits, that fear the sound of the wind!"

It was in vain that he tried to provoke them. They only seemed to enjoy his agony and the bitter words that it called forth.

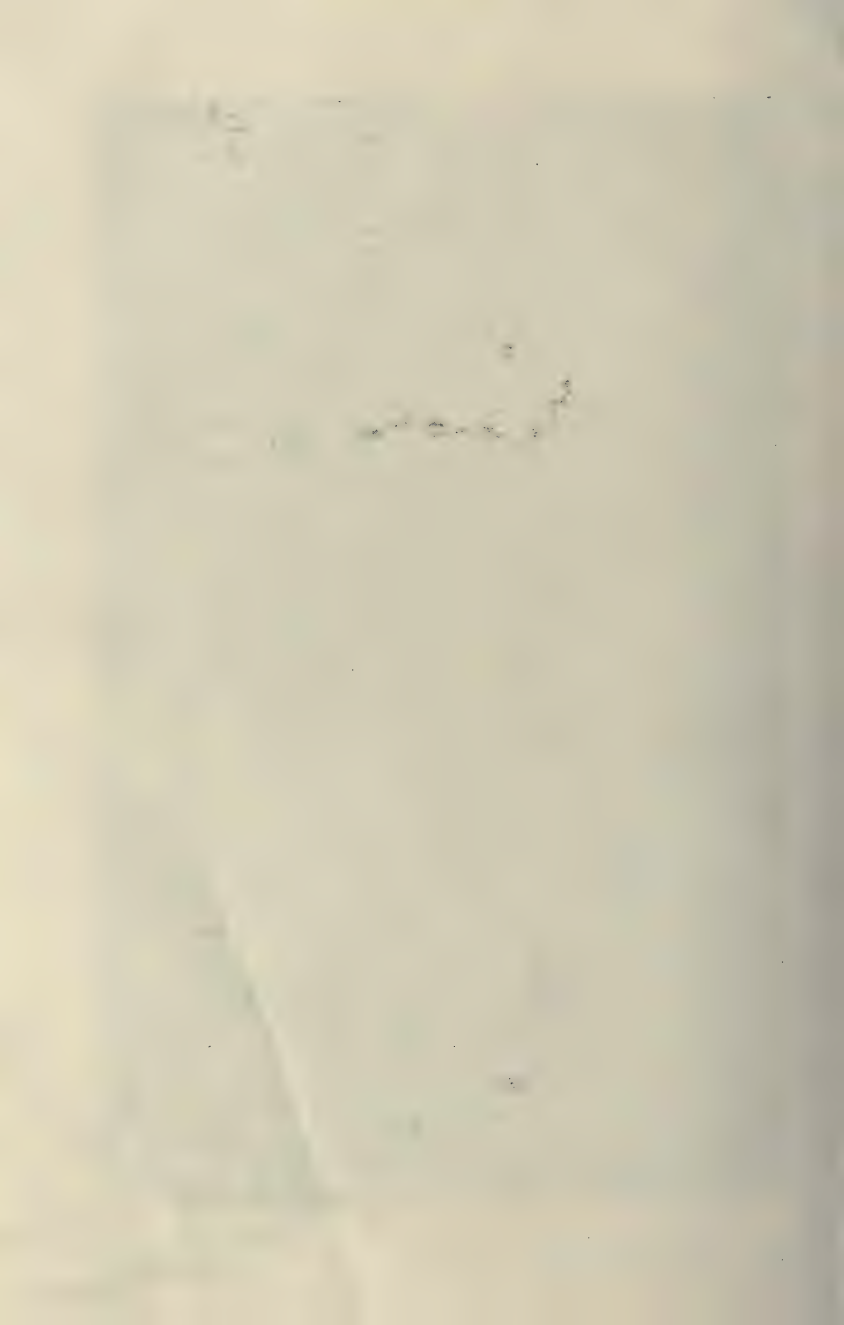
"Eat and drink," said Apukwa, coldly, as soon as he became silent, "for we are going to tie thee. We must hunt the deer, we must grind the corn; we cannot watch thee every day till the time of the sacrifice comes. Eat and drink, then, for here are the thongs."

Walter glared at him for a moment, and then snatched up a gourd filled with water, which the brother of the Snake had brought, draining it with a long and eager draught. He then cast it from him, and stood still and stern before them, saying: "I will disappoint you. Hence-



"My brother—my husband," she said." "Otaita has found thee at length." Page 216.

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forth I will eat no more. Tie me if you will. I can fast as well as you Indians."

The two men looked in each other's face, apparently puzzled how to act, for if he kept his resolution their object would indeed be frustrated. The death of their kinsman, according to their superstition, required blood, and by starvation the prisoner would escape from their hands. Still they dared not disobey the decision of the chiefs. A slight sign seemed to pass between them, and taking hold of the poor lad somewhat roughly, they bound both his hands and feet, twining the strong thongs of deerskin round and round, and through and through, in what seemed inextricable knots. He stood quite still and impassive, and when they had done, cast himself down upon the ground again, turning his face from them. The two men gazed at him for a moment or two, and then leaving the hut in silence, replaced the bar.

For some time after they had gone, Walter lay just as he had fallen. The dead apathy of despair had taken possession of him. Life, thought, feeling, was a burden. The many days which had passed in that dull, dark, silent abode was rapidly producing on his mind that effect which solitary confinement is said to occasion but too often.

He lay in that deathlike stillness for several hours; nor came there a sound of any kind during all that time to relieve the black monotony of the day. His ear, by suffering, had been rendered painfully acute, but the snow fell noiselessly, the wild animals were in their coverts or in their dens, the very wind had no breath.

Suddenly there was a sound. What was it? It seemed a cracking branch, far up above his head. Then a stone rolled down and rattled over the roof, making the snow slip before it. Another crashing branch, and then a silence which seemed to him to last for hours. "Some panther or catamount," he thought, "in the trees above," and he laid his half-raised head down again upon the ground.

No! There were fingers on the bar. He heard it move!

Had the Indians come back to urge the food upon him? The touch upon the bar, however, seemed feeble compared with theirs. It lifted the heavy bar of wood slowly and with difficulty. Walter's heart beat—visions came before his mind—hope flickered up, and he raised himself as well as he could into a sitting posture. From the ground he could not rise, for his hands were tied.

Slowly and quietly the door opened, the light rushed in, and in the midst of the blaze stood the beautiful figure of the Blossom, with her head partly turned away, as if in the act of listening. Her curly, long, wavy hair, broken from its band, and spotted with the white snow, fell almost to her feet. But little was the clothing that she wore. No mantle, no overdress, nothing but the Indian woman's embroidered skirt, gathered round her by a belt, and leaving the arms and legs bare. Her hands were torn and bloody, her bright face and brow scratched by the fangs of the bramble, but still to Walter Prevost, as she stood listening there, it was the loveliest sight his eyes had ever rested on.

But for a moment she listened, then gazed into the hut, sprang forward, cast her arms around his neck, and wept as she had never wept before.

"My brother—my husband," she said, leaning her forehead on his shoulder, "Otaita has found thee at length!"

He would fain have cast his arms around her; he would fain have pressed her to his heart; he would fain have told her that he could bear death, or even life, or any fate, for such love as hers. But his hands were tied, and his tongue was powerless with emotion.

A few moments passed in silence, and then Otaita said: "The cruel wolves have tied thee, but Otaita will give thee freedom."

In an instant her small, delicate fingers were busy with the thongs, and with the rapidity of thought they were all untied, and hands and feet were both loose; but as she worked, the blood dropped from her fingers on to his

wrists, and while he held her to his heart he said: "Thou bleedest, my Blossom. Oh, Otaitsa, what hast thou risked, what hast thou encountered for Walter's sake?"

"But little, my beloved," she answered. "Would it were ten times more, to prove my love! What! They have put meat within thy sight, and tied thy hands to make thee die of famine, with food before thee! Out on the cruel monsters!"

"No, no, my Otaitsa!" answered Walter. "I would not eat. I wished to die. I knew not that an angel would come to cheer and help me."

"And to deliver thee, too, my Walter," answered Otaitsa, with a bright smile. "I trust it is certain, my beloved. By the way I came, by that way you can go."

"How came you?" asked Walter, seating her beside him, and pressing her closer with his arm to the bosom on which she leaned. "I thought it was impossible for anyone to reach me, so stern is this place, so close the watch they kept. It must have been very perilous for thee, my Blossom. Art thou not hurt?"

"Oh, no," she answered, "nor was the peril really great. God gave me wings to fly to thee. Love bore me up; but let me tell thee how I came. I have a friend, the wife of one of thine enemies, a young bride to whom his heart is open as the lake. From her I heard of all their plans; how they have filled the woods below the rocks with watchers, how they have set guards on every trail. They never dreamed that from the morning side a way could be found down over the rock into this dell. I pondered over the tidings, and remembered that when I was a little, happy child I clambered some way down, by the aid of shrubs and crevices, in search of fruit; and I laid my plan against theirs. I took two ropes which I had woven long ago, of the tough bark of the moose plant, and making a wide circle round, I reached the upland above the cliffs. My only trouble was to find the exact spot from that side; for I knew that there was a cloud between me and your ene-

mies, and that I walked unseen. At length, however, I found the rock overlooking the chasm. I cast off all burdens, all that the brambles or branches might snatch at, and with the ropes wound round me, came down as far as I could find safe footing. There was a tree, a small tree, on the pinnacle, and I tried it before I trusted it. One branch broke, but the root and stump stood firm, gripping the rock fast. To them I fixed the end of one rope, and easily swung down to a point below, where there was a larger, stronger tree. A stone, however, slipped from under my feet, and fell rattling down. Round the strong tree I twisted the rope again, and thus reached the very ledge overhead; but there, as there had been noise and some crashing of the branches, I stood for a while, hidden behind the bushes, to make sure that I was not discovered. At length, however, I was satisfied, and now the other rope was a friend to give me help. I fastened it to the first, knotted it into tight loops, and thus aiding hands and feet, with sometimes the aid of a projecting stone, and sometimes a small shrub, came slowly down. By the same way I shall return, my love, and by it, too, my Walter must go back this night to his own people."

"Why not with you now?" asked Walter, eagerly. "Let Otaitsa go with me, and whenever we reach my father's house become my wife indeed. Oh, how gladly will he fold her to his heart, how fondly will Edith call her sister!"

"It cannot be, beloved," she answered. "I came to save him I love, to save him who is the husband of my heart, but not to abandon my father till he gives me to you; and besides, there would be none to help us. This night you must climb by the ropes and boughs up to the top of the cliff, when, as near as you can reckon, there has been six hours of darkness. At the top you will find people waiting. They are but women, yet they all love you and me likewise, and they have sworn by their Great Spirit that if it costs their lives they will set you free. Each will help you in some way. One has a canoe upon the creek,

another knows the deepest woods on the Mohawk side, and can guide you well. Others will lead you down Ward Creek to Sir William Johnson's Castle, where you are safe. Eat now, my beloved, for you must have strength, and Otaita must leave you soon. Before she goes she must tie your hands again, lest your enemies come ere the night; but she will tie them in such a sort that with your teeth you can undraw the knot; and she will loosen the fastening of the bar so that even a weak hand can push it out."

She had hardly uttered the words, when a low, mocking laugh came upon their ears, and two or three dark forms shadowed the doorway. Otaita instantly started up and drew a knife from the belt around her waist.

"Stand back!" she cried aloud in the Iroquois tongue, as the men glided in. "I am your great chief's daughter, and the blood of the Black Eagle will not bear a touch."

"We touch thee not, Blossom," answered Apukwa. "Thou shalt go free, for the Black Eagle is a mighty chief, a mighty warrior, revered by his people; but our prisoner we keep, and though thou hast loosened his hands we can fasten them again. Put thy tomahawk in thy belt, brother of the Snake; it must taste no blood here, though it is hungry, I know well. He shall die, but not now."

As he spoke he thrust his arm between the younger Indian and Walter, who had cast himself before Otaita, as if for one desperate struggle if he saw any violence offered to her. The words of the medicine man, however, quieted him on that score, and it was but too plain that all resistance on his part would be in vain. A few hours before he had sought death as a boon, but the coming of the Blossom had changed all his thoughts and feelings, had relighted hope and restored firmness and constancy. He was willing to live, and for the chances of what some other day might bring; for the love and self-devotion of that beautiful creature made existence seem too valuable to cast away the slightest chance of its preservation.

He suffered them to bind him then, while Otaita turned

away her head and struggled against the tears that sought to rise. It cost her a great effort, but resolution triumphed, and with a lofty air, very different from the tenderness of her demeanor a few moments before, she waved her hand for the Indians to make way, saying: "Unworthy Oneidas, I go to carry my own tale to my father's feet, to tell him that with his own blood warm in my heart I came thither to save my brother, my lover, my husband, and to warn him that the tomahawk which falls on that beloved head severs the chain of Otaitsa's life. But fear not, Walter," she continued, turning toward him; "fear not, my beloved. Live, and laugh thine enemies to scorn. Thou shalt be delivered yet, let these men do what they will. It is written on high that thou shalt not perish by their hands," and thus saying, she left the hut, and followed closely by two of the Oneidas, pursued her way back toward the Castle.

When she reached the gate of the palisade she at once perceived a good deal of commotion and activity within, though none but women, youths, and children were to be seen.

"Where is the Black Eagle?" she asked of the first woman whom she met. "Has he returned to the lodge?"

"He returned with forty warriors," replied the other, in a grave tone, "painted himself for battle, and has gone forth upon the warpath, taking with him every warrior he could find."

"Against whom?" asked Otaitsa, in as calm a tone as she could assume, but with her heart beating fast.

"We do not know," replied the woman, sadly; "but a tale spread, coming out of darkness throughout which none could see, that the Black Eagle had gone against our brethren, the Mohawks and Onondagas. It was said they had unburied the hatchet, and cut down the tree of peace before the door of the Oneidas."

Otaitsa clasped her hands together, bent her head, and took some steps toward the door of the lodge, and then,

turning to the two men who had followed her, she said, bitterly: "And ye were absent when the Black Eagle called for warriors! Ye were right, for ye are women, and have only courage to torment a captive."

Thus saying, she passed on with a quiet step into the lodge, and there, when no eye could see her, gave way in tears to all the sad and bitter feelings of her heart.

CHAPTER XX

THROUGH the widespread woods which lay between the extensive territory occupied by the Mohawks and the beautiful land of the Oneidas, early in the morning of the day, some of the events of which have been already recorded, a small troop of Indians glided along in their usual stealthy manner. They were in their garments of peace. Each was fully clothed according to the Indian mode, and the many-colored mat of ceremony hung from their shoulders as they passed along, somewhat encumbering them in their progress. They took the narrow trails; but yet it was not so easy for them to conceal themselves, if such was their object, as it might have been in another dress and at another time; for, except when passing a still brilliant maple, or a rich brown oak, the gaudy coloring of their clothing showed itself strongly either against the dark evergreens or the white snow.

The party had apparently traveled from night into day, for as soon as the morning dawned the head man of the five stopped, and, without changing his position—and thus avoiding the necessity of making fresh prints in the snow—conversed over his shoulder with those behind him. Their conversation was brief, and might be translated into modern English thus:

“Shall we halt here, or go on farther? The day’s eyes are open in the east.”

“Stay here till noon,” said an elder man behind him. “The Oneidas always go to their lodge in the middle of the day. They are children. They require sleep when the sun is high.”

Another voice repeated the same advice, and springing one by one from the trail into the thicket, they gathered together under a wide-spreading hemlock, where the ground was free from snow, and seated themselves in a circle beneath the branches. There they passed their time nearly in silence. Some food was produced, and also some rum, the fatal gift of the English; but very few words were uttered, and the only sentences worth recording were:

"Art thou quite sure of the spot, brother?"

"Certain," answered the one who had been leading. "The intelligence was brought by an Albany runner, a man of a true tongue."

From time to time each of the different members of the group looked up toward the sky, and at length one of them rose, saying: "It is noon; let us onward. We can go forward for an hour, and then we shall be near enough to reach the place and return while the shadows are on the earth."

"We were told to spread out and enter by several trails," said an elder man of the party.

"It is not needful now," said the man who seemed the leader of the party, "when it can all be done between sun and sun."

His words seemed conclusive, and they resumed the path again, walking on stealthily in a single file, as before. They had gone about three miles more, when a wild, fearful yell, such as no European would believe a human throat could utter, was heard upon their right. Another rose up on their left the instant after, and then another in their front. Each man stopped in breathless silence, as if suddenly turned to stone, but each with the first impulse had laid his hand upon his tomahawk. All listened for a repetition of the well-known war-whoop, and each man asked himself what such a sound could mean in a land where the Indians were all at peace amongst themselves, and where no tidings had been received of a foreign foe; but no man uttered a word, even in a whisper, to the man close

to him. Suddenly a single figure appeared upon the trail before them, tall, powerful, commanding, and one well known to all there present. It was that of the Black Eagle, now feathered and painted for battle, with his rifle in his hand, and his tomahawk ready.

"Are ye Mohawks?" he exclaimed, as he came near. "Are we brethren?"

"We are Mohawks and brethren," replied the leader of the party. "We are but wandering through the forest, seeking to find something which has been lost."

"What is it?" asked the Black Eagle, sternly; "nothing is lost which cannot be found. Snow may cover it for a time, but when the snow melts, it will come to light."

"It is a young lad's coat," said the cunning Mohawk; "but why is Black Eagle on the warpath? Who has unburied the hatchet against the Oneidas?"

"The Black Eagle dreamed a dream," replied the chief, round whom numerous Oneidas, equipped for war, had by this time gathered, "and in his dream he saw ten men come from the midday into the land of the Oneida, and ten men from the side of the cold wind. They wore the garb of peace, and called themselves brothers of the children of the Stone. But the eyes of the Black Eagle were strong in his dream, and he saw through their bosoms, and their hearts were black, and a voice whispered to him that they came to steal from the Oneida that which they cannot restore, and to put a burden upon the children of the Stone that they will not carry."

"Was it not the voice of the singing bird?" asked the young Mohawk chief. "Was the dream sent by the bad spirit?"

"I know not," answered the Black Eagle, "say ye! But the Black Eagle believed the dream, and starting up, he called his warriors round him, and he sent Lynx Eyes, the sachem of the Bear, to the north, and led his own warriors to the south, saying: 'Let us go and meet these ten men, and tell them, if they be really brethren of the Oneidas,

to come with us, and smoke the pipe of peace together, and eat and drink in our lodges and return to their own land when they are satisfied; but if their hearts are black and their tongues double, to put on the warpaint openly, and unbury the long buried hatchet, and take the warpath like men and warriors, and not creep to mischief like the silent copperhead!"

These last words were spoken in a voice of thunder, while his keen black eyes flashed, and his whole form seemed to dilate with indignation.

The Mohawks stood silent before him, and even the young chief who had shown himself the boldest amongst them bent down his eyes to the ground. At length, however, he answered: "The Black Eagle has spoken well, and he has done well, though he should not put too much faith in such dreams. The Mohawk is the brother of the Oneida; the children of the Stone and the men of blood are one, though the Mohawk judges the Oneida hasty, in deeds. He is the panther that springs upon his prey from on high, before he sees whether it is not the doe that nourishes his young. He forgets hospitality——"

The eyes of the Black Eagle flashed fiercely for a moment, but then the fire went out in them, and a grave, and even sad look succeeded. The young man went on boldly, however, saying: "He forgets hospitality. He takes to death the son of his brother, and sheds the blood of him who has eaten of the same meat with him. He waits not to punish the guilty, but raises his tomahawk against his friend. The Five Nations are a united people; that which brings shame upon one brings it upon all. The Mohawk's eyes are full of fire and his head bends down, when men say 'the Oneida is inhospitable; the Oneida is hasty to slay, and repays faith, and trust, and kindness by death.' What shall we say to our white father beyond the salt waters, when he asks us, 'Where is my son Walter, who loved the Oneidas, who was their brother, who sat by their council fire, and smoked the pipe of peace with them?'

Shall we say, 'The Oneidas have slain him because he trusted to the hospitality of the Five Nations and did not fly?' When he asks us, 'What was his crime?' and 'Did the Oneidas judge him for it like calm and prudent men?' shall we answer, 'He had no crime, and the Oneidas took him in haste, without judgment. He was full of love and kindness toward them—a maple tree overrunning with honey for the Oneidas, but they seized him in haste, when, in a few moons, they could have found many others.' If we say that, what will our great father think of his red children? Black Eagle, judge thou of this, and when thou dreamest another dream, see thou forked-tongued serpents hissing at the Five Nations, and ask, 'Who made them hiss?' I have spoken."

The feeling excited by this speech in all the Oneida warriors who heard it would be difficult to describe. There was much anger, but there was more shame. The latter was certainly predominant in the breast of Black Eagle. He put his hand to his shoulder, as if seeking for his mantle to draw over his face, and after a long pause he said: "Alas! that I have no answer. Thou art a youth, and my heart is old. My people should not leave me without reply before a boy. Go in peace! I will send my answer to him who sent thee, for our brethren the Mohawks have not dealt well with us in using subtlety. There are more of you, however. Let each of them return to his home, for the children of the Stone are masters of themselves."

"Of us there are no more than thou seest," answered the young man.

Black Eagle gazed at him somewhat sternly, and then answered: "Six men have entered the Oneida lands from this side since morning yesterday, by separate ways. Let them go back. We give them from sun to sun, and no one shall hurt them; but if they be found here after that, their scalps shall hang upon the warpost."

Thus saying, he turned and withdrew with his warriors, while the young Mohawk and his companions glided back

through the woods toward their own district, almost as silently as they came.

The returning path of the great Oneida chief was pursued by him and his companions with a slow and heavy tread. Not a word was spoken by anyone, for there were both deep grief and embarrassment upon each; and all felt that there was much justice in the reproof of the young Mohawk. They had come forth with feelings of indignation and anger at the intelligence which had been received of the interference of other tribes in the affairs of the Oneida people, and they still felt much irritation at the course which had been pursued; but still their pride was humbled, and their native sense of justice touched by the vivid picture which had just been given of the view which might be taken by others of their conduct toward Walter Prevost.

At this time, while the confederacy of the five powerful nations remained entire, and a certain apprehensive sense of their danger from the encroachments of the Europeans was felt by all the Indian tribes, a degree of power and authority had fallen to the great chiefs which probably had not been attributed to them in earlier and more simple times. The great chief of the Mohawks called himself king, and in some degree exercised the authority of a monarch. Black Eagle, indeed, assumed no different title from the ordinary Indian appellation of sachem, but his great renown and his acknowledged wisdom had, perhaps, rendered his authority more generally revered than that of any other chief in the confederacy. The responsibility, therefore, weighed strongly upon him, and it was with feelings of deep gloom and depression that he entered the great Oneida village shortly before the hour of sunset. The women and children were assembled to see the warriors pass, excepting Otaitsa, who sat before the door of Black Eagle's great lodge, with her head bent down, under an oppressive sense of the difficulties and dangers of her coming task.

Black Eagle saw her well, and saw that she was moved by deep grief; but he gave no sign even of perceiving her, and moving slowly, and with an unchanged countenance, to the door, he seated himself by her side, while his warriors ranged themselves round, and the women and young people formed another circle beyond the first. It was done without concert and without intimation, but all knew that the chief would speak before they parted. Otaita remained silent, in the same position, out of reverence for her father, and, after a short pause, the voice of the Black Eagle was heard, saying: "My children, your father is grieved. Were he a woman, he would weep. The reproach of his people, and the evil conduct of his allies, would bring water into the eyes that never were moist. But there is a storm upon us, the heaviest storm that ever has fallen. The waters of our lake are troubled, and we have troubled them ourselves. We must have counsel. We must call the wisdom of many men to avert the storm. Let, then, three of my swiftest warriors speed away to the heads of the eight tribes, telling them to come hither before the west is dark to-morrow, bringing with them their wisest men. Then shall my children know my mind, and the Black Eagle shall have strength again."

He paused, and Otaita sprang upon her feet, believing that intelligence of what she had done had reached her father's ears. "Ere thou sendest for thy chiefs, hear thy daughter!"

Black Eagle was surprised, but no sign of it was apparent on his face. He slowly bowed his head, and the Blossom went on:

"Have I not been an obedient child to thee? Have I not loved thee, and followed thy slightest word? I am thy child altogether. Thou hast taken me often to the dwelling of the white man, because he is of my kindred. Thou hast often left me there whilst thou hast gone upon the warpath, or hunted in the mountains. Thou hast said, 'They are of our own blood. My wife, my beloved, was

of high race amongst the paleface people of the east, the daughter of a great chief. I saved her in the day of battle, and she became mine; and true and faithful, loving and just, was the child of the white chief to the great sachem of the Oneidas. Shall I keep her daughter from all communication with her kindred?' Young was I, a mere child, when first thou tookest me there, and Edith was a sister, Walter a brother to me. They both loved me well, and I loved them; but my love for the brother grew stronger than for the sister, and his for me. We told our love to each other, and he said, 'When I am old enough to go upon the warpath I will ask the Black Eagle to give me Otaitsa, and the red chief and the white chief shall again be united, and the bonds between the Oneidas and the English people shall be strengthened;' and we dreamed a dream that all this would be true, and pledged ourselves to each other forever. Now, what have I done, my father? The brethren of the Snake, and the chief Apukwa, contrary to the customs of the Oneidas, seized upon my betrothed, carried off my husband captive four days after their brother was slain by a white man, but not by my Walter. It is not for me to know the laws of the Oneidas, or to speak of the traditions of our fathers, but in this, at least, I knew that they had done evil; they had taken an innocent man before they had sought for the guilty. I found the place where they had hid him. I climbed to the top of the rock above the chasm. I descended the face of the precipice. I tied two ropes to the trees for his escape. I loosened the thongs from his hands, and from his feet, and I said, 'This night thou shalt flee, my husband, and escape the wrath of thine enemies.' All this I did, and what is it? It may be against the law of the Oneidas, but it is the law of a woman's own heart, placed there by the Great Spirit. It is what my mother would have done for thee, my father, hadst thou been a captive in the hands of thine enemies. Had I not done it, I should not have been thy child, I should have been unworthy to

call the Black Eagle father. The daughter of a chief must act as the daughter of a chief. The child of a great warrior must have no fear. If I am to die, I am ready."

She paused for a moment, and Black Eagle raised his head, which had been slightly bowed, and said, in a loud, clear voice: "Thou hast done well, my child. So let every Indian woman do for him to whom she is bound. The women of the children of the Stone are not as other women. Like the stone, they are firm; like the rock, they are lofty. They bear warriors for the nation. They teach them to do great deeds."

"Yet bear with me a little, my father," said Otaitsa, "and let thy daughter's fate be in thy hand before all the eyes here present. Apukwa and the brethren of the Snake had set a watch, and stole upon me and upon my white brother, and mocked thy daughter and her husband, and bound his hands and feet again, and said that he shall die!"

It is rare that an Indian interrupts the speech of anyone, but the heart of the chief had been altogether with Otaitsa's enterprise, and he now exclaimed, with great anxiety, "Then has he not escaped?"

"He has not," replied Otaitsa. "It went as I have said. Walter Prevost is still in the hands of the brethren of the Snake and of Apukwa, and he is not safe, my father, even until the nation shall have decided what shall be his fate. When the nation speaks," she continued, emboldened by her father's approbation, "then will Otaitsa live or die, for I tell thee, and I tell all the warriors here present, that if my husband is slain for no offence by the hand of an Oneida, the daughter of the chief dies, too!"

"Koui! koui!" murmured the chiefs, in a low, sad tone, as they gazed upon her, standing in her great beauty by her father's side, while the setting sun peeped out from beneath the edge of the snow cloud and cast a gleam of rosy light around her.

"He is not safe even till the word is spoken," said

Otaitsa, "for they are bad men that hold him. They took him contrary to our customs. They despise our laws. They are Honontkoh, and fear nothing but the tomahawk of the Black Eagle. They drink blood. They slay their mothers and their brethren. They are Honontkoh!"

A murmur of awe and indignation at the hated name of the dark secret order existing amongst the Indians, but viewed with apprehension and hatred by all the more noble warriors of the tribes, ran round the circle, and Black Eagle rose, saying: "Let them be examined, and if the stripe be found upon them, set honest men to guard the lad. To-morrow, at the great council, we will discuss his fate, and the Great Spirit send us dreams of what is right. Come with me, my child. The Blossom is ever dear."

Thus saying, he turned and entered the lodge.

CHAPTER XXI

ABOUT two o'clock on the following day long lines of Indian chiefs and warriors might be seen approaching the great Oneida village. Soon after, a great fire was lighted before the door of the principal lodge, and, as on the preceding evening, the warriors were ranged in a circle round, and the women and children in another beyond. The great chief, dressed in all the glittering finery of the Indian peace costume, with feathers and red and white head dress, and crimson mantle, and embroidered shirt and overdress, and medals innumerable hung around his neck, took the seat of honor with a grave dignity, such as few civilized monarchs have, even after the greatest study, been able to attain. He wore no warlike weapons, nothing but a single knife appeared in his girdle, and in his hand he carried the richly ornamented calumet, or pipe of peace.

Close behind her father sat Otaitsa, with her heart greatly troubled, but less, perhaps, with fear than with expectation. The Black Eagle had been kind and tender with her when they had been alone together. He had held her to his heart with a display of fondness such as an Indian rarely shows openly to his child. He had listened to the whole tale of her love for Walter Prevost without a word of disapprobation or reproach, and sometimes even a playful smile had come upon his dark, stern face as her words recalled the memory of feelings experienced in youth, like a well-remembered song heard again after a long lapse of years. Instead of reprehending her attempt to deliver Walter, he commended it highly. "It was thy part, my child; thou shouldst have been a boy, Otaitsa; the warrior's spirit is in the maiden's bosom."

But when she came to speak of her lover's fate, to plead, to sue, to entreat, the stern, grave coldness of the Indian chief returned; and though she could see that he was full of fixed resolves, she could in no way discover what they were. The explanation of them she knew was now to come, and it may be imagined with what eager and intense interest she listened for every word.

There was, of course, some little confusion as the multitude took their places, but it was soon hushed, and then a deep silence spread around. The great pipe was lighted, and sent from hand to hand till it had passed all around the circle, and then, and not till then, Black Eagle rose and spoke.

"Have my words been heard?" he said. "Have my warriors examined whether any of the dark and infernal order of the Honontkoh are amongst us?"

He seated himself again as soon as he had made the inquiry, and after a moment's pause two middle-aged warriors, who had been with him on the preceding day, rose and took a step forward, while one of them said: "We have heard thy words, and examined. The brother of the Snake, Apukwa, the medicine man, and the Flying Squirrel are Honontkoh. The stripe is upon them and upon none else."

"It is well," said the chief, rising again. "Bring forward that man who was taken at our Castle door, last night."

Half a dozen young men sprang upon their feet and speedily brought from the door of a neighboring lodge the half-breed runner Proctor, whom we have seen with Brooks and Lord H—— at Albany. He had a calumet in his hand, the sign of a peaceful mission, and he showed no fear, for he knew that his life would be respected, although he had learned by this time that the Oneidas had been greatly excited by some acts referring to the very object of his mission. Standing in the midst of them, as calm and collected as he had been in the fort at Albany, he hardly gave

a glance round the circle, but looked straight, with a cold and inexpressive countenance, at the chief before whom he was placed.

"What hast thou to say?" demanded Black Eagle.

The man remained silent, although there was an evident movement of his lips as if to speak.

"Fear not," said Black Eagle, mistaking the ineffectual effort to speak for a sign of apprehension, although it really proceeded from a habitual unwillingness to hear the sound of his own voice, "thou shalt go in safety, whatever be thy message. Art thou dumb, man? Is thy tongue a stone?"

"I am not dumb—I am not afraid," said the man, with a great effort. "Great chiefs in Albany send me to say, 'Give us the boy?'"

There he stopped, for it had cost him much to utter so many words.

"Were they war chiefs?" demanded Black Eagle, aloud.

The man nodded his head, and Black Eagle asked: "Did they threaten the Oneidas—did they say they would unbury the hatchet?"

The runner shook his head, and the chief asked, "What did they say, then, would befall us if we refused to comply?"

"Shame," replied Proctor, aloud; and Black Eagle suddenly drew his mantle over his face.

A low murmur spread round like the hum of a hive of bees, and when it had subsided the chief rose, and with an air of grave, sad dignity, looked round upon his people. "Ye have heard, oh children of the Stone," he said, in a rich, clear, deep-toned voice, "what the chiefs of the pale-faces say of the Oneida nation; and there are warriors here who were with me yesterday when our brethren the Mohawks reproached me with treachery and inhospitality toward our paleface brother, Prevost; and the Black Eagle had nothing to answer. Ye know the history. Why should I sing again the song of yesterday? A man of our nation was slain by one of the Yengees, and the brethren of the

dead man seized upon the son of Prevost, who is also our son, without searching for him who had spilt the blood. This was contrary to the custom of the Five Nations; but they say the man was not to be found, he was already beyond our territory, and we must take the first we can find to appease the spirit of our brother. But Prevost is a good man, loved by all the Five Nations, as a brother to the red-man, a friend who trusted us. So hard do the Mohawks and the Onondagas think this deed, that they have dealt subtly with the Oneidas, and striven to rescue our captive from our hands by the crooked ways of the serpent. The paleface chiefs, too, have sent men into our land, and think darkly of the Oneidas; but the Black Eagle saw what they did, and spread his wings and drove them forth. He had no answer for the reproaches of the Mohawks or for the Yengees. He will give them both their answer this day by the messenger, and the children of the Stone will thereby know his mind. Let them say if it be good."

Then turning to Proctor, he stretched out his hand toward the south, saying: "When thou goest hence, two of my warriors shall go with thee to the Castle of the Mohawk, and thou shalt say, 'Why hast thou dealt subtly with the Oneidas? If thou hast aught against him, why didst thou not send a messenger of peace to tell thy brother thy mind, or why didst thou not appeal to the great council of the Five Nations, to judge between thee and him? If thou wilt unbury the hatchet, and cut down the tree of peace, and bring trouble into the Five Nations, that the paleface may prevail, and our Long House be pulled down to the ground, then paint thy face, and dance the war dance, and come upon the battleway, but follow not the trail of the serpent, to steal unperceived into thy brother's land.' "

A murmur of approbation followed this bold speech, but the next moment the chief continued, still addressing Proctor, and saying: "When thou hast thus spoken to the Mohawk, thou shalt go on to the paleface chiefs at Albany, and to them thou shalt say: 'The children of the Stone

have heard your message. They are the children of the great king. He is their father, and they love him. But the Oneidas have their own laws, and are led by their own chiefs. They take the warpath against your enemies as against their own, and ye are glad in the day of battle when they fight the Frenchman by your side. It is sweet to them that you have used no threats, and they would not have their white brother think darkly of them. They love, too, the chief, Prevost. They love his son as a brother; but one of their own children has been slain by one of yours, and their law must be fulfilled. His spirit must not be shut out from the happy hunting grounds. They will mourn as a whole nation for Walter Prevost, but Walter Prevost must die unless the wanderer is taken. Thus says the Black Eagle, the great chief of the Oneida nation; he who has taken a hundred scalps of his enemies, and fought in fifteen battles with your foes and his. Give us up the murderer if ye would save the boy. He is in your land. You can find him. Do justly by us in this matter, and walk not in the trail of the fox to deceive us and to save from us our captive.' ”

Then pausing for an instant, he somewhat lowered his voice, but spoke the succeeding words very slowly and distinctly, in order that every syllable might not only be impressed upon the mind of the man he addressed, but be clearly heard and comprehended by all the people around: “Thou shalt say, moreover, to our brethren, the paleface chiefs at Albany, that the Black Eagle finds that Walter Prevost has fallen into the hands of bad men, who cannot be trusted, dealers in dark things, vultures whose heads are bare but whose hearts are covered. The Black Eagle will take the boy from their hands, and will treat him well and keep him in safety till the hour come. As ye have said that the Oneidas are hasty, that they do rashly, that they have not sought as they ought to seek, for six moons will Black Eagle keep the lad in peace as his own son, to see if ye will give him up the murderer of an Oneida. But

as the chief would slay his own son if the laws of his own people required it at his hands, so will he and the chiefs of his nation slay Walter Prevost, if in six moons ye do not give him up the murderer. He shall die the death of a warrior, with his hands unbound; and as Black Eagle knows the spirit that is in him, he is sure that he will die as a warrior should. This thou shalt say to the English chiefs; let them look to it; the fate of the boy depends upon their counsel. Give him a roll of wampum for his reward, and let him go in peace."

His commands were immediately obeyed, and the half-breed runner removed from the circle. Then, turning to the warriors, without reseating himself, the chief demanded, "Have I said well?"

The usual words of approbation followed, repeated by almost every voice present, and then Black Eagle resumed in a stern tone, saying: "And now, my children, what shall be done to the Honontkoh? I have already removed the captive from their hands, for they are a people without faith. They live in darkness, and they wrap themselves in a shadow. They take their paths in deceit, and we see blood and dissension follow them. Already have they raised against us the wrath of our brethren of the Five Nations. They have brought the yellow cloud of shame upon the Oneida name. They have well nigh severed the threads which hold the roll of our league together. They have laid the hatchet to the root of the tree which we and our English father planted. I say let them go forth from amongst us. The totem of the Tortoise casts them forth. We will not leave our lodges near their lodges. They shall not dwell within our palisade. Let them betake themselves to the darkness of the forest and to the secret holes of the rock, for darkness and secrecy are the dwelling places of their hearts; or let them go, if they will, to the deceitful Hurons, to the people beyond Horicon, and fight beside the deceitful Frenchman. With us they shall not dwell; let them be seen no more amongst us. Is my judgment good?"

A general cry of approbation followed, the council broke up, the warriors commenced wandering about, those who came from a distance seeking hospitality in the neighboring lodges, for the great lodge itself could not afford room for all.

To her own little chamber Otaita retired at once, and barring the door, went down upon her knees to offer up thanksgiving and prayer—thanksgiving, for hope is ever a blessing—prayer, for there was danger still before her eyes. Safe for the next six months she knew Walter would be in the careful custody of her father, but she still prayed earnestly that her mother's God would find some way of deliverance for the sake of Him who died to save mankind.

CHAPTER XXII

MORE than five months had passed; months of great trouble and anxiety to many. The woods, blazing in their autumnal crimson when last we saw them, had worn and soiled in a short fortnight the glorious vestments of the autumn, and cast them to the earth, and now they had put on the green garments of the summer, and robed themselves in the tender hues of youth.

It was under a large tree, on a high bank commanding the whole prospect round for many and many a mile, and in the eastern part of the province of New York, that three redmen were seated in the early summer of 1758. A little distance in advance of them, and somewhat lower down the hill, was a small patch of brush, composed of fantastic-looking bushes, and one small blasted tree. It formed, as it were, a sort of screen to the Indians' resting place from all eyes below, and yet did not in the least impede their sight as it wandered over the wide forest world around them. From the elevation on which they were placed the eye of the redman, which seems, from constant practice, to have gained the keenness of the eagle's sight, could plunge into every part of the woods around, where the trees were not actually contiguous. The trail, wherever it quitted the shelter of the branches; the savanna, wherever it broke the outline of the forest; the river, where it wound along on its course to the ocean; the military road from the banks of the Hudson to the head of Lake Horicon; the smallest pond, the little stream, were all spread out to view as if upon a map.

Over the wide, extensive prospect the eyes of those three Indians wandered incessantly, not as if employed in search-

ing for some definite object, the direction of which, if not the precise position, they knew, but rather as if they were looking for anything which might afford them some object of pursuit or interest. They sat there nearly two hours in the same position, and during the whole of that time not more than four or five words passed between them. But at length they began to converse, though at first in a low tone, as if the silence had its awe, even for them. One of them pointed with his hand toward a spot to the eastward, saying: "There is something doing there."

In the direction to which he called the attention of his companions was seen spread out in the midst of the forest and hills a small but exquisitely beautiful lake, seemingly joined on to another of much greater extent by a narrow channel. Of the former, the whole extent could not be seen, for every here and there a spur of the mountains cut off the view, and broke in upon the beautiful, waving line of the shore. The latter was more distinctly visible, spread out broad and even, with every little islet, headland, and promontory marked clear and definite against the bright, glistening surface of the waters. Near the point where the two lakes seemed to meet, the Indians could descry walls, and mounds of earth, and various buildings of considerable size—nay, even what was probably the broad banner of France, though it seemed but a mere whitish spot in the distance, was visible to their sight.

At the moment when the Indian spoke, coming from a distant point on the larger lake, the extreme end of which was lost to view in a sort of blue, indistinct haze, a large boat or ship might be seen, with broad white sails, wafted swiftly onward by a cold northeasterly wind. Some way behind it another moving object appeared, a boat likewise, but much more indistinct, and here and there, nearer in-shore, two or three black specks, probably canoes, were darting along upon the bosom of the lake like waterflies upon the surface of a still stream.

"The palefaces take the warpath against each other,"

said another of the Indians, after gazing for a moment or two.

"May they all perish!" said the third. "Why are our people so mad as to help them? Let them fight, and slay, and scalp one another, and then the redman tomahawk the rest."

The other two uttered a bitter malediction in concert with this fierce but not impolitic thought, and then, after one of their long pauses, the first who had spoken resumed the conversation, saying: "Yet I would give one of the feathers of the white bird to know what the palefaces are doing. Their hearts are black against each other. Can you not tell us, Apukwa? You were on the banks of the Horicon yesterday, and must have heard the news from Corlear."

"The news from Albany matters much more," answered Apukwa. "The Yengees are marching up with a cloud of fighting men, and people know not where they will fall. Some think Oswego, some think Ticonderoga. I am sure that it is the place of the singing waters that they go against."

"Will they do much in the warpath," asked the brother of the Snake, "or will the Frenchman make himself as red as he did last year at the south of Horicon?"

"The place of the singing waters is strong, brother," replied Apukwa, in a musing tone, "and the Frenchmen are great warriors; but the Yengees are many in number, and they have called for aid from the Five Nations. I told the Huron who sold me powder, where the eagles would come down, and I think he would not let the tidings slumber beneath his tongue. The great winged canoes are coming up Corlear very quick, and I think my words must have been whispered in the French chief's ear to cause them to fly so quickly to Ticonderoga."

A faint, nearly suppressed smile came upon the lips of his two companions as they heard of this proceeding; but the younger of the three inquired: "And what will Apukwa do in the battle?"

"Scalp my enemies," replied Apukwa, looking darkly round.

"Which is thine enemy?" asked the brother of the Snake.

"Both," answered the medicine man, bitterly; "and every true Honontkoh should do as I do; follow them closely, and slay every man that flies, be his nation what it may. So long as he be white it is enough for us. He is an enemy. Let us blunt our scalping knives on the skulls of the pale-faces. Then when the battle is over we can take our trophies to the conqueror and say, 'We have been on thy side!'"

"But will he not know?" suggested the younger man. "Will he listen so easily to the song?"

"How should he know?" asked Apukwa, coldly. "If we took him redmen's scalps he might doubt; but all he asks is white men's scalps, and we will take them. They are all alike, and they will have no faces under them."

This ghastly jest was highly to the taste of the two hearers, and bending down their heads together, the three continued to converse for several minutes in a whisper. At length one of them said: "Could we not take Prevost's house as we go? How many brothers did you say would muster?"

"Nine," answered Apukwa, "and our three selves make twelve." Then, after pausing for a moment or two in thought, he added: "It would be sweet as the strawberry, and as easy to gather; but there may be thorns near it. We may tear ourselves, my brothers."

"I fear not," answered the brother of the Snake. "So that I but set my foot within that lodge, with my rifle in my hand and my tomahawk in my belt, I care not what follows."

"The boy is to die," answered Apukwa. "Why seek more in his lodge at thine own risk?"

The other did not answer, but after a moment's pause he asked: "Who is it has built the lodge still farther to the morning?"

"One of the workers of iron," answered Apukwa, meaning the Dutch. "He is a great chief, they say, and a friend of the Five Nations."

"Then no friend of ours, my brother," answered the other speaker; "for though it be the children of the Stone who have shut the door of the lodge against us and driven us from the council fire, the Five Nations have confirmed their saying, and made the Honontkoh a people apart. Why should we not fire that lodge, too, and then steal on to the dwelling of Prevost?"

"Thy lip is thirsty for something," said Apukwa. "Is it the maiden thou wouldst have?"

The other smiled darkly, and, after remaining silent for a short space, answered: "They have taken from me my captive, and my hand can never reach the Blossom I sought to gather. The boy may die, but not by my tomahawk; and when he does die I am no better, for I lose that which I sought to gain by his death. Are Apukwa's eyes misty, that he cannot see? The spirit of the Snake would have been as well satisfied with the blood of any other paleface, but that would not have satisfied me."

"But making Prevost's house red will not gather for thee the Blossom," answered Apukwa.

The third and younger of the Indians laughed, saying: "The wind changes, Apukwa, and so does the love of our brother. The maiden in the lodge of Prevost is more beautiful than the Blossom. We have seen her thrice since this moon grew big, and my brother calls her the Fawn, because she has become the object of his chase."

"Thou knowest not my thought," said the brother of the Snake, gravely; "the maiden is fair, and she moves round her father's lodge like the sun. She shall be the light of mine, too; but the brother of the Snake forgets not those who disappoint him; and the boy Prevost would rather see the tomahawk falling than know that the Fawn is in my lodge."

The other two uttered that peculiar humming sound by

which the Indians sometimes intimate that they are satisfied, and the conversation which went on between them related chiefly to the chances of making a successful attack upon the house of Mr. Prevost. Occasionally, indeed, they turned their eyes toward the boats upon Lake Champlain, and commented upon the struggle that was about to be renewed between France and England. That each party had made vast preparations was well known, and intelligence of the extent and nature of these preparations had spread far and wide amongst the tribes, with wonderful accuracy as to many of the details, but without any certain knowledge of where the storm was to break.

All saw, however, and comprehended, that a change had come over the British government; that the hesitating and doubtful policy which had hitherto characterized their military movements in America was at an end, and that the contest was now to be waged for the gain and loss of all the European possessions on the American continent. Already it was known amongst the Five Nations, although the time for the transmission of the intelligence was incredibly small, that a large fleet and armament had arrived at Halifax, and that several naval successes over the French had cleared the way for some great enterprise in the north. At the same time, the neighborhood of Albany was full of the bustle of military preparation, and a large force was already collected under Abercrombie for some great attempt upon the lakes; and from the west, news had been received that a British army was marching rapidly toward the French forts upon the Ohio and the Monongahela. The Indian natives roused themselves at the sound of war, for though some few of them acted regularly in alliance with one or the other of the contending European powers, a greater number than is generally believed cared little whom they attacked, or for whom they fought, or whom they slew, and were, in reality, but as a flock of vultures, spreading their wings at the scent of battle, and ready to take advantage of the carnage, whatever was the result of the strife.

CHAPTER XXIII

WE must now return to the scene in which this narrative first commenced ; but, oh ! how changed was the aspect of all things from that which the house of Mr. Prevost presented but five short months before ! The father and the daughter were there alone. The brother no longer gleamed about the house, with his blithesome air and active energies, and the thought of him and of his fate hung continually, like a dark shadow, over those to whom he was so dear. They were not wholly without comfort ; they were not wholly without hope ; for, from time to time, renewed assurances came to them from many a quarter that Walter would still be saved. But still time wore on, and he was not delivered.

During the winter Lord H—— visited them very frequently, and it is probable that, had no dark cloud overshadowed the hopes as well as the happiness of all, he would have pressed for the prize of Edith's hand without delay ; but he loved not the mingling of joy and sorrow. In that, at least, his view of the world, and life, and fate, was deceitful. He was not yet convinced, although he had some experience, that such a thing as unalloyed happiness, even for a few short days, is not to be found on earth—that the only mine of gold without dross lies beneath the grave.

In the meantime, the gathering together of British soldiers on the Hudson and the Mohawk had, like one wave meeting another, somewhat repelled the Indian tribes. A runner, a half-breed, or one or two redmen together—more frequently from the nation of the Mohawks than from any other tribe—would be seen occasionally, wandering through

the woods, or crossing the open ground near the settler's dwelling; but they seldom approached the house, and their appearance caused no apprehension. Relations of the greatest amity had been established between the British authorities and the chiefs of the Five Nations, and several of the tribes were preparing to take part in the coming strife upon the side of England.

Three times during the winter the house of Mr. Prevost was visited by a single Indian of the Oneida tribe. On two occasions it was a man who presented himself, and his stay was very short. On the first occasion, Edith was alone, when, without the sound of footsteps, he glided in like a dark shadow. His look was friendly, though for a moment he said nothing, and Edith, well knowing their habits, asked if he would take food. He answered yes, in his own language; and she called some of the servants to supply him; but before he ate, he looked up in her face, saying: "I am bidden to tell thee that thy brother shall be safe."

"Whose words do you bear?" asked Edith; "is it the Black Eagle speaks?"

"Nay; Otaitsa," replied the man.

This was all she could learn, for the messenger was either ignorant of more or affected to be so; yet still it was a comfort to her. The next who came was a woman, somewhat past the middle age, and by no means beautiful. She stayed long, and with good-natured volubility related all that had happened immediately after Edith's visit to the Oneida Castle. She dwelt upon the attempt of the Blossom to deliver her lover as she would have expatiated upon some daring feat of courage in a warrior; and though in the end she had to tell how the maiden's bold effort had been frustrated, she added: "Yet he shall be safe; they shall not slay our brother."

The third time the same man returned, bearing the same assurances; but, as hour after hour went by, and day by day, without the lad's return, or any definite news of him, hope sickened and grew faint. By this time it was known

that the efforts of the Mohawks and the Onondagas had been frustrated; and, moreover, it was plainly intimated by the chiefs of those two nations that they would interfere no more.

"The Oneidas have reproved us," they said, "and we had no reply. We must not make the children of the Stone hiss at our children; neither must we break the bonds of our alliance for a single man."

The scouts who had been put under the order of Woodchuck were recalled to the army early in the spring without having effected anything. All that had been heard at the forts showed that the young prisoner had been removed to the very farthest part of the Oneida territory, where it was impossible for any single Englishman to penetrate without being discovered by the Indians.

Of Woodchuck himself nothing was heard till the flowers began to spring up, close upon the footsteps of the snow. It was believed that he was still in the forest, but even of this no one was assured; and all that, with any accuracy, could be divined, was that he had not fallen into the hands of the Oneidas, inasmuch as there was every reason to believe that, had such been the case, Walter's liberation would have immediately followed. Thus matters had gone on in the household of Mr. Prevost, till about a month before the period at which I have thought best to present to the reader the three Indians seated on the hill.

The day had been one of exceeding loveliness, and not without its activity, too, for a party of soldiers had been thrown forward for some object, to a spot within a mile and a half from the house, and Lord H—— had been twice there, making Edith's heart thrill, each time he appeared, with emotions still so new and strange as set her dreaming for an hour after he was gone. The evening had come, bringing with it some clouds in the western sky, and Edith, as she sat with her father, looked out from the window, with her head resting on her hand.

As she gazed, she perceived a figure slowly crossing be-

tween the gardener boy and old Agrippa, who were working in the gardens, and apparently taking its course to the door of the house. At first she did not recognize it, for it was more like an Indian than that of a European, more like that of a bear than either. It had a human face, however, and as it came forward an impression, at first faint, but increasing with every step it advanced, took possession of her, that it must be the man whose fatal act had brought so much wretchedness upon her family. He was very much, very sadly changed; and although the bearskins in which he was dressed hid the emaciation of his form, the meagerness of his face was very evident as he came near.

Edith lifted her head from her hand, saying: "I think, my father, here is Captain Brooks approaching. Poor man! he seems terribly changed!"

Mr. Prevost started up, gazed for a moment from the window, and then hurried forth to meet him.

Edith had the happiness to see her father take the wanderer kindly by the hand and lead him toward the door. Whatever had been Mr. Prevost's feelings, the sight of Woodchuck's altered face was enough to soften them entirely. The next moment they entered the room together, and Edith extended her hand kindly to him.

"Ah, Miss Prevost, you are very good," he said; "and so is your father, too. I have not been to see you for a long time."

"That was not right of you, Woodchuck," she said; "you should have come to see us. We know all you have been trying to do for my brother. If you cannot succeed it is not your fault, and we should have been glad to see you, both for your own sake and for the sake of hearing all your proceedings as they occurred."

"Ah, but I have been far away," he answered. "I first tried to get at the poor boy from this side, and finding that would not do, I took a long round and came upon them from the west; but I got nothing but some information; and then I made up my mind. Them Ingians are as can-

ning as Satan. I have circumvented them once, but they won't let a man do it twice."

Mr. Prevost had stood listening, eager to hear anything that related to his son. "We will more of this by and by, Brooks. Come into the hall and have some food. You must be hungry and tired, both, I am sure."

"No," replied Woodchuck, "I am not hungry. Tired a little I am, I guess, though I have not walked more than forty miles. But I met a young Ingian, two or three hours ago, who gave me some venison steaks off his own fire. Some rest will soon set all to rights."

"Take some wine at least," said Mr. Prevost; "that will do you good; you look quite faint."

"Faint in limb, but not in heart," replied Woodchuck, stoutly. "However, I won't refuse the wine, for it was given to cheer the heart of man, as the Bible says, and mine wants cheering, though it does not want strengthening; for I'll do what I say, as I'm a living man."

They took him into the hall, and persuaded him both to eat and drink, evidently to his benefit, for though he did not lose the sad tone in which he spoke, his voice was stronger, and his features seemed to grow less sharp.

"And where have you been ever since the snow has been on the ground?" asked Edith, when he seemed a little revived. "You cannot surely have been wandering in the woods during the terribly severe weather we had in January."

"I huddled myself down," he said, "like an Ingian or a beaver, and covered the lodge all over with snow. I planted it upon a ledge of rock, with its mouth close behind an old hemlock tree, and made it white all over, so they would have been worse than devils to find me; for life is sweet, Miss Prevost, even in winter time, and I did not wish to be tomahawked so long as I could help it."

"You must have had a sad, desolate time, I fear," said Mr. Prevost; "at least till the spring came round."

"I guess it wasn't very cheerful," answered Woodchuck;

"but that's the best way to teach one's self not to care for what's coming. At least I used to think so once, and to believe that if a man could once make himself very miserable in this world he would not much care how soon he went out of it; but I've changed my opinion on that matter a little, for up there on the side of the hill, after four or five weeks, half famished, half frozen, I did not feel a bit more inclined to die than I did a year ago, when there were few lighter-hearted than myself. So I thought, before I did anything of the kind, knowing that there was no need of it just yet, I would just go and take a ramble among the mountains in the fine weather, like Jephtha's daughter."

His words would have been enigmas to Edith, had she not somehow misunderstood their obvious meaning; for Lord H——, not fully knowing the character of the man, and unwilling to excite confident hope that might ultimately be disappointed by some change of Woodchuck's feelings, had foreborne to mention more of his purposes than the mere fact of his intention to peril his own life to save that of Walter Prevost. To Edith the words used by Woodchuck seemed but to imply that he still contemplated some daring attempt to set her brother at liberty; and in the hope, if she could learn the particulars of his scheme, to be able to procure the co-operation of Otaitsa and others in the Oneida Castle, she said: "You are indeed a good, kind friend, Woodchuck, and you have, I know, already undergone great risks for poor Walter's sake. There are others laboring for him, too, and perhaps if we knew what you intended to do next——"

"To do next!" exclaimed the man, interrupting her. "Why, haven't I told you? I said when I found I could not get in from the west I made up my mind."

"To do what, my good friend?" said Mr. Prevost. "You certainly implied you intended to do something, but what you did not state. Now, I easily understand Edith's anxiety to know your intentions, for we have obtained friends

in the Oneida camp who might give great assistance to your efforts if we knew what they are to be. But I should tell you, my dear daughter here ventured across the Mohawk country to see our dear little Otaitsa, who, like you, risked her own life to save my poor boy—God's blessing be upon her!"

The tears rose in his eyes, and he paused for a moment; but Woodchuck waved his hand, saying: "I know all about it. I were on the bank of the creek, Miss Edith, when the Indian woman paddled you back, and I guessed how it had all been. I said to myself, when I heard more of it two days arter, 'Her father will be mighty angry,' and so he were, I guess."

"You are mistaken, my friend," said Mr. Prevost, laying his hand on Edith's with a tender pressure. "I was not angry, though I was much alarmed; but that alarm was not of long endurance, for I was detained much longer than I expected at Sir William Johnson's, and my anxiety was only protracted two days after my return. But still you have not told us of your plans. If that dear girl, Otaitsa, can help us, she will do it if it cost her life!"

Woodchuck paused a moment or two, in deep, absent thought, and over his rough countenance the trace of many a strong emotion flitted; but at length he said, in a low, distinct voice: "She can do nothing. Black Eagle has the boy under his keen eye. He loves him well, Mr. Prevost, and he will treat him kindly; but just as much as he does love him he will make it a point to keep him safely, and to kill him, too, if he ha'n't got another victim. That man should ha' been one of those old Romans I have heard talk of, who killed their own sons and daughters rather than not do what they thought right. He'd not spare his own flesh and blood—not he; and the more he loves him the surer he'll kill him!"

Edith wept, and Mr. Prevost covered his eyes with his hands; but Woodchuck, who had been gazing down upon the table, and saw not the powerful emotions his words

had produced, proceeded, after a gloomy pause: "He'll watch his daughter sharply, too, though they say he praised her daring; and that I guess he did, for that's just the sort of thing to strike his fancy. He'll take care she sha'n't do it again. No! no! There's but one way with Black Eagle. I know him well, and he knows me, and there is but one way with him."

"What's that?" asked Mr. Prevost, in a tone of deep melancholy.

"Just to do what I intend," replied Woodchuck, with a very calm manner. "Mr. Prevost, I love my life as much as any man—a little too much, mayhap, and I intend to keep it as long as I rightly can; for there are always things written in that chapter of accidents that none on us can see. But I don't intend to let your son Walter—he's a good boy—be put to death for a thing of my doing. You don't suppose it? At first, when the thing came fresh upon me at Albany, I felt mighty like a fool and a coward, and I would ha' skulked away into any hole, just to save myself from myself. But I soon took thought, and made up my mind. Now, 'ere you and Miss Edith have been praising and thanking me for trying to save poor Walter's life. I didn't deserve no praise, no thanks, either. It was my own life I was trying to save; for if I could get him out secretly we should both be secure enough; but I've given it up. It can't be done; and Black Eagle knows it. He knows me, too, and he's just as sure at this blessed moment that before the day he has appointed for Walter to die, Woodchuck will walk in and say, 'Here I am!' as he is that he's in his own lodge. Then he will have got the right man, and all will be settled. Now, Mr. Prevost, and you, Miss Edith, you know what I intend to do. To-morrow, when I'm a bit rested, I shall set out again and take my ramble in the mountains like Jephtha's daughter, as I said. Then this day month I will be here again to bid you all good-bye. Walter will have to tell you the rest. Don't cry so, there's a good girl. You're like to set me a-crying, too. There's

one thing more I have to ask you both, and that is: Never speak another word to me about this matter—not even when I come back again. I try not to think of it at all myself, and I don't much now. If I can screw myself up like those Ingians, I shall just walk quietly in among them as if nothing were going to happen, and say, 'Set the boy free; here's Woodchuck himself,' and then die—not like an Indian, but like a Christian, I trust, and one that knows he's a-doing of his duty, anyhow. So now not a word more—and let's talk of something else."

Woodchuck steadily and sturdily refused to pursue any further the subject of his fixed determination, although both Mr. Prevost and Edith, deeply touched, and, to say the truth, much agitated, would fain have dwelt upon the topic longer. Edith felt, and Mr. Prevost argued in his own mind, that the poor man was performing a generous and self-devoted act, which no moral obligation forced upon him. They felt, too, that so noble a heart was not one which ought to be sacrificed to the vengeful spirit of the Indians; and the natural feeling of joy and satisfaction which they experienced at the apparent certainty of Walter's deliverance from death seemed to them almost a crime, when it was to be purchased at so dear a price.

His obstinacy, however, conquered; the subject was changed; and as they sat together in the little room to which he had led the way, they continued a broken sort of conversation, while the shades of evening gathered thick round them, upon topics connected with that which they had quitted, though avoiding the point which was most painfully prominent in the mind of each.

"They are a savage set," he would say, "and the devil himself has a share in them. I have heard people talk much of their generosity, and all that, but I guess I've not seen much of it."

Mr. Prevost was silent, for his feelings had suffered a natural change toward the Indians; but Edith exclaimed, warmly: "We cannot say that of dear Otaitsa, at all

events, Woodchuck; for she surely has a heart full of generosity, and everything that is noble."

"That's not raal, that's not raal," answered Woodchuck. "That comes of the blood that's in her. For that matter, Black Eagle has some fine things about him. He's the best of them I ever saw. We used to say, 'Whole Ingian, half devil.' I think in his case it must have been quarter devil, and that's saying a good deal for so fierce a man as he in battle. They say he has scalped more enemies than all his tribe put together, specially in that war down upon the Pennsylvania side some nineteen years ago, when some of our people foolishly took part with the Mohagans."

Mr. Prevost started, and Woodchuck went on, saying: "He has good things, for he always makes his people spare the women and children; which is what them Ingians seldom think of. A scalp's a scalp to them, whether it has got long hair on it or only a scalp-lock. But, as I was saying, the Blossom has got all that is good in him, and all that was good in her mother, poor thing; and that was a mighty great deal."

"I have often wished," said Mr. Prevost, "that I could hear something of Otaitsa's history. Her mother, I believe, was a white woman, and I have more than once tried, when I found the Black Eagle in a communicative mood, to lead him to speak upon the subject; but the moment it was touched upon he would wrap his blanket round him and stalk away."

"Aye! he has never forgotten her," said Woodchuck. "He never took another wife, you know; and well he may remember her, for she was his better angel, and ruled him completely, which was what no one else could. But I can tell you all about it, if you like to know, for I heard it all from an old squaw, one time; and I saw the lady once, too, myself, and talked to her."

"I think," said Edith, thoughtfully, "that she must have been a lady; for when I was in their lodge, I saw, in

Otaitsa's little chamber, a great number of things of European manufacture and of high taste."

"May not those have been procured for the dear girl by our good friend Gore?" asked Mr. Prevost. "He is a man of much taste himself."

"I think not," answered Edith. "They are evidently old, and seemed to have belonged to one person; besides, there are a number of drawings, all evidently done by one hand—not what anyone would purchase, and apparently by an amateur rather than an artist."

Mr. Prevost fell into a fit of thought, and leaned his head upon his hand, but Woodchuck replied: "Oh, they are her mother's, beyond doubt; they are her mother's. She was quite a lady, every inch of her; you could hear it in the tone of her voice, you could see it in her walk. Her words, too, were those of a lady; and her hand, too, was so small and delicate it could never have seen work. Do you know, Miss Edith, she was wonderfully like you—more like you than Otaitsa. But I'll tell you all about it, just as I heard it from the old squaw. At the time I talk of—that's a good many years ago—eighteen, or nineteen, maybe—Black Eagle was the handsomest man that had ever been seen in the tribes, they say, and the fiercest warrior, too. He was always ready to take part in any war, and whenever fighting was going on he was there. Well, the Delawares had not been quite brought under at that time by the Five Nations, and he went down with his warriors and the Mohawks, to fight against the Mohagans; they were Delawares, too, you know, somewhere on the Monongahela River, just at the corner of Pennsylvania and Virginny. Our people had given some help to the Mohagans, and they were, at that time, just laying the foundations of a fort, which the French got hold of afterward and called Fort du Quesne. Well, there was an old general officer who thought he would go up and see how the works were going on, and as things were quiet enough just then—though it was but a calm before a storm—he took his daughter with

him, and journeyed away pleasantly enough through the woods. I dare say, though, it must have been slow work, for as he intended to stay all the summer, the old man took a world of baggage with him; but the third or fourth night after leaving the civilized parts they lodged in an Indian village, when, all in a minute, just as they were going to bed, down comes Black Eagle upon them with his warriors. There was a dreadful fight in the village, nothing but screams, and war-whoops, and rifle shots; and the Mohagans, poor devils, were almost put out that night; for they were taken unawares, and they do say not a man escaped alive out of the wigwam. At the first fire out rushes the old general from the hut, and at the same minute a rifle ball, perhaps from a friend, perhaps from an enemy—no one can tell—goes right through his heart. Black Eagle was collecting scalps all this time, but when he turned round, or came back, or however it might be, there he found the poor young lady, the officer's daughter, crying over her father. Well, he wouldn't suffer them to hurt her, but took her away to the Oneida country with him, and gathered up all her goods and chattels, and her father's, and carried that off, too; but all for her, for it seems he fell in love with her at first sight. What made her first like him, they say, was that he wouldn't let the savages scalp the old man, telling them that the English were allies, and declaring that the ball that killed him did not come from an Oneida rifle. However that may be, the poor girl had no choice but to marry Black Eagle, though the old woman said that, being a great chief's daughter, she made him promise never to have another wife, and, if ever a Christian priest came there, to be married to her according to her own fashion."

While he spoke Mr. Prevost had remained apparently buried in deep and very gloomy thought, but he had heard every word, and his mind had more than once wandered wide away, as was its wont, to collateral things, not only in the present but in the past. When Woodchuck stopped

he raised his head and gazed at him for a moment in the face, with a look of earnest and melancholy inquiry. "Did you ever hear her name?" he asked. "Can you tell me her father's name?"

"No," replied Woodchuck. "I had the history almost all from the old squaw, and if she had tried to give me an English name she would have manufactured something, such as never found its way into an English mouth. All she told me was that the father was a great chief among the English, by which I made out that she meant a general."

"Probably it was her father's portrait I saw at the Indian Castle," said Edith. "In Otaita's room there was a picture that struck me more than any of the others, except, indeed, the portrait of a lady. It was that of a man in a military dress of antique cut. His hand was stretched out, with his drawn sword in it, and he was looking round with a commanding air, as if telling his soldiers to follow. I marked it particularly at first, because the sun was shining on it, and because the frame was covered with the most beautiful Indian beadwork I ever saw. That of the lady, too, was similarly ornamented; but there was another interested me much—a small pencil drawing of a young man's head, so like Walter that at first I almost fancied dear Otaita had been trying to make his portrait from memory."

"Would you remember the old man's face, my child, if you saw it again?" asked Mr. Prevost, gazing earnestly at his daughter.

"I think so," said Edith, a little confused by her father's earnestness; "I am quite sure I should."

"Wait, then, a moment," said Mr. Prevost, "and call for lights, my child."

As he spoke he rose and quitted the room; but he was several minutes gone, and lights were burning in the chamber when he returned. He was burdened with several

pictures of small size, which he spread out upon the table, while Edith and Woodchuck both rose to gaze at them.

"There! there!" cried Edith, putting her finger upon one, "there is the head of the old officer, though the attitude is different; and there is the lady, too; but I do not see the portrait of the young man!"

"Edith," said her father, laying his hand affectionately upon hers, and shaking his head sadly, "he is no longer young, but he stands beside you, my child. That is the picture of my father; that, of my mother. Otaita must be your cousin. Poor Jessie! We have always thought her dead, although her body was not found with that of her father. Better had she been dead, probably."

"No, no, Prevost!" said Woodchuck. "Not a bit of it! Black Eagle made her as kind a husband as ever was seen. You might have looked all Europe and America through, and not have found as good a one. Then think of all she did, too, in the place where she was. God sent her there to make better people than she found. From the time she went, to the time she died, poor thing! there was no more war and bloodshed, or very little of it. Then she got a Christian minister amongst them—at least, he never would have been suffered to set his foot there if she had not been Black Eagle's wife. It is a hard thing to tell what's really good, and what's really evil, in this world. For my part, I think, if everything is not exactly good—which very few of us would like to say it is—yet good comes out of it; like a flower growing out of a dunghill; and there's no saying what good to the end of time this lady's going there may produce. Bad enough it was for her, I dare say, at first; but she got reconciled to it; so you mustn't say it would have been better if she had died."

"It is strange, indeed," said Mr. Prevost, "what turns human fate will take. That she, brought up in the midst of luxury, educated with the utmost refinement, sought and admired by all who knew her, should reject two of the most distinguished men in Europe to go to this wild land and

marry an Indian savage! Men talk of fate and destiny, and there are certainly strange turns of fortune, so beyond all human calculation and regulation that the doctrine of the fatalist seems true."

"Do you not think, my dear father," said Edith, waking up from a profound reverie, "that this strange discovery might be turned to some great advantage; that Walter, perhaps, might be saved without the necessity of our poor friend here sacrificing his own life to deliver him?"

"That's like a dear, good girl," said Woodchuck; "but I can tell you, it's no use."

"But," urged Edith, "Otaita ought to know, for Black Eagle certainly would never slay the nephew of a wife so dear to him."

"It's no use," repeated Woodchuck, almost impatiently. "Don't you know, Miss Edith, that Walter and the Blossom are in love with each other, and that's worth all the blood relationship in the world. Sometimes it does not last as long, but while it does it's twice as strong. Then, as to Black Eagle, he'd kill his own son, if the customs of his people required it. I guess it would only make him tomahawk poor Walter the sooner, just to show that he would not let any human feeling stand in the way of their devilish practice. No! no! Much better keep it quiet. It might do harm, for aught we can tell; it can and will do no good. Let that thing rest, my dear child. It's settled and decreed. I am ready now, and I shall never be so ready again. Let me take one more look at my mountains, and my lakes, and my rivers, and my woods, and I've done with this life. Then God, in His mercy, receive me into another. Amen. Hark! There is someone coming up at a good gallop. That noble young lord, I dare say."

It was as Woodchuck had supposed; and the moment after, Lord H—— entered the room with a beaming look of joy and satisfaction in his countenance. He held a packet of considerable size in his hand, and advanced at once to Mr. Prevost, saying: "My dear sir, I am rejoiced

to present to you this letter, not alone because it will give you some satisfaction, but because it removes the stain of ingratitude from the country. His Majesty's present ministers are sensible that you have not received justice; that your long services to the country in various ways—all that you have done, in short, to benefit and ameliorate your race, and to advocate all that is good and noble—have been treated with long neglect, which amounts to an offence; and they now offer, as some atonement, a position which may lead to wealth, and a distinction which, I trust, is but the step to more."

"What is it, George? What is it?" asked Edith, eagerly.

"It is, I am told," replied Lord —, "in a letter which accompanies the packet; a commission as commissary general of the army here, and an offer of the rank of baronet."

"Thank God!" said Edith; and then, seeing a look of surprise at her earnestness come upon her noble lover's face, a bright smile played round her lips for a moment, and she added: "I say thank God, George—not that I am glad my father should have such things, for I hope and trust he will decline them both; but the very offer will heal an old wound, by showing him that zealous exertions and the exercise of high and noble qualities are not always to be treated with neglect, forgetfulness, and contempt. He will be glad of it, I am sure, whatever his decision may be."

"Now I understand you, my own love," answered Lord H—. "With regard to the baronetcy, he shall do as he will; but I must press him earnestly to accept the office tendered to him. To decline it might show some resentment. By accepting it he incurs no peril, and he serves his country; for from his knowledge of the people here, of the very physical features of the land and its resources, and of the habits and feelings of all classes, I believe no man could be found, with one or two exceptions, so well fitted for the task as himself— Ah! my good friend

Captain Brooks, how do you do? I have much wished to see you lately, and to hear of your plans."

"I am as well as may be, my lord," replied Woodchuck, wringing in his heavy grasp the hand which Lord H—— extended to him. "As for my plans, they are the same as ever; you did not doubt me, I am sure."

"I did not," replied Lord H——, gravely, and looking down, he fell into a fit of thought. At length, looking up, he added: "And yet, my good friend, I am glad you have had time for reflection, for since we last met I have somewhat reproached myself for at least tacit encouragement of an act, in the approval of which so many personal motives mingle that one may well doubt one's self. Forgive me, Edith—forgive me, Mr. Prevost, if I ask our friend here if he has well considered, and weighed in his own mind, calmly and reasonably, without bias, nay, without enthusiasm, whether there be any moral obligation on him to perform an act which I suppose he has told you he contemplated."

"There is no forgiveness needed, my lord," said Mr. Prevost. "I would have put the same question to him if he would have let me. Nay, more; I would have told him, whatever I might suffer by the result, that in my judgment there was no moral obligation. Because he did a justifiable act these Indians commit one that is unjustifiable, upon an innocent man. That can be no reason why he should sacrifice his life to save the other. God forbid, that even for the love of my own child, I should deal in such a matter unjustly. I am no Roman father—I pretend not to be such. If my own death will satisfy them, let them take the old tree, withered at the root, and spare the sapling, full of strength and promise; but let me not doom—let me not advise a noble and an honest man to sacrifice himself from a too generous impulse."

"I do not know much of moral obligations," replied Woodchuck, gravely, "but I guess I have thought over the thing as much as e'er one of you. I have made up my mind,

and just on one principle, and there let it rest, in God's name! I say to myself, 'Woodchuck, it's not right, is it, that anyone should suffer for what you ha' done?' 'No, it's not.' 'Well, is there any use talking of whether they've a right to make him suffer for your act or not? They'll do it.' 'No, there's no use a-talking, because they'll do it. It's only shuffling off the consequences of what you did upon another man's shoulders. You never did that, Woodchuck; don't do it now. Man might say, it's all fair; God might pardon it, but your own heart would never forgive it!'"

Edith sprang forward and took both his hands, with her beautiful eyes full of tears. "God will prevent it!" she said, earnestly. "I have faith in Him. He will deliver in our utmost need! He provided the Patriarch with an offering, and spared his son. He will find us a means of escape if we but trust in Him."

"Miss Edith," replied Woodchuck, gravely, "He may or He may not, according to His own good pleasure; but of this I am sure, that though Christ died for our transgressions, we have no right to see anyone else suffer for our doings. I have read my Bible a great deal up there on the hillside lately—more than I ever did before since I was a little boy—and I am quite certain of what I'm about. It has been a comfort and a strength to me. It's all so clear—so very clear. Other books one may not understand—one can't misunderstand that unless one tries very hard. And now, pray, let's have an end on't here. My mind is quite made up. There's no use of saying a word more."

All the rest were silent, and Edith left the room with the large tears rolling over her cheeks.

CHAPTER XXIV

WHEN Edith rose on the day following the visit of poor Captain Brooks, somewhat later than was her custom—for the first half of the watches of the night had known no comfort—Woodchuck was gone. He had waited for no leave-taking, and was on his way toward the mountains before the dawn of day.

It was better for all, indeed, that he should go, and he felt it. Not that there was any chance of his resolution being shaken, but as he had himself said, he wished to forget that resolution—to think no more of his coming fate than the dark remembrance of it within his own heart forced him to think; and the presence of Mr. Prevost and his daughter—the very absence of Walter from their fire-side—would have reminded him constantly of the rock on which his bark was inevitably steering. With Mr. Prevost and Edith his presence would have had the effect of keeping up the struggle between affection for Walter and a kindly sense of justice toward him. His every look, his every word, would have been a source of painful interest, and the terrible balancing of very narrowly divided equities, where life was in the scale and affection held the beam, would have gone on, in the mind at least, continually.

When he was gone the agitating feelings gradually subtranspose themselves, and they almost looked upon him as a thing decided; the mind was relieved from a greater apprehension by a lesser, and a quiet melancholy, whenever his coming fate was thought of, took the place of anxious alarm. In some sort the present and the past seemed to transpose themselves, and they almost looked upon him as already dead.

True, all fear in regard to Walter was not completely banished. There was nothing definite, there was no tangible object of apprehension. They felt perfectly sure that Woodchuck would execute his resolution, but yet the heart, like an agitated pendulum, vibrated long after the momentum had ceased. It grew quieter and quieter by degrees, however, on the part of Mr. Prevost; a change of thought and of object did much. All his preparations had to be made for the proper execution of the office he had undertaken. He had more than once to go to Albany, and on each occasion he took his daughter with him. Each change had some effect, and both he and Edith recovered a certain degree of cheerfulness at last in general society. It was only in the quiet and the silent hours, when either was left alone, when those intervals took place during which sleep refuses to visit the eye, when all external sounds are still, when all external sights are absent, and the mind is left alone with thought, and nothing but thought for its companion—it was only then that the fear, and the anxiety, and the gloom returned.

Every moment that could be spared from military duties were passed by Lord H—— at Edith's side, whether in her own home or in the city.

Thus passed nearly three weeks, by which time the bustle of active preparation, the marching of several regiments toward the north, and signs of activity and haste in every department, gave notice to the inhabitants of Albany that some important military movement was about to take place. The fife and drum, the lumbering roll of the cannon, were daily heard in the quiet streets. Boats were seen collecting on the river, parades and exercises occupied the greater part of every day; scouts and runners were hurrying about in all directions, and clouds of Indians, painted and feathered for the warpath, hovered round the city, and often appeared in the streets. Lord H—— had advanced with his whole regiment to the neighborhood of Sandy Hill; other bodies of troops were following, and the commissary

general, whose active energy and keen intelligence surprised all who had only known him as a somewhat reserved and moody man, had advanced to a spot on the Hudson where a small fort had been built at the commencement of what was called the King's road, to see with his own eyes the safe delivery and proper distribution of the stores he had collected. Long ranges of huts had gathered round the fort, which was judged so far within the English lines as to be a place of perfect security, and many a lady from Albany, both young and old, had gathered together there to see the last of husband, brother, or father, before they plunged into the forest and encountered the enemy.

Here everything was done, as usual, to smooth the front of war and conceal ugly features, and certainly after the arrival of Lord H—— with his regiment and the wing of another, the scene was brilliant and lively enough. Bright dresses, glittering arms, military music, fluttering flags, and prancing chargers, were beheld on every side, and gay and lively talk, only interrupted now and then by the solemn words of adieu, of caution, or direction from anxious heart to anxious heart, hid in a great degree the deeper, stronger, sterner feelings that were busy underneath.

In all such expeditions, amidst the bustle and excitement, there come lapses of quiet inactivity, especially before the first blow is struck. Some accident causes a delay; some movements have not been combined with sufficient accuracy; one party has to wait for another, and is left unoccupied. Thus it was in the present instance. A small but important division of the army, to be accompanied by a large body of Indians, was retarded by a deficiency of boats, and the news arrived that two days must elapse before they could reach the fort. A superior officer was now present, and both Lord H—— and Mr. Prevost felt that it would be no dereliction of duty to seek leave of absence, in order to visit once more the house of the latter, and personally escort Edith to the place where she was to remain

till the object of the expedition was accomplished. The same day it was first made known what the object of that expedition was. The word Ticonderoga was whispered through the encampment, running from the general's quarters through every rank down to the private soldier, and a strange sort of feeling of joy spread throughout the force; not that many knew either the importance of the object or the state of the place, but simply that all were relieved from an uncertainty.

The comment of Lord H—— was very brief. He had long known, indeed, the fact now first published, but as he told it to Edith while seating her on her horse to set out, he said: "The place is, luckily, near, and the business will soon be brought to an end, my love." A something indefinable in his heart made him add mentally, "one way or another," but he gave no utterance to the gloomy doubt, and the little party rode away.

A calm, quiet evening, with the wind at the south, the sun setting red in clouds, and a gray vapor stealing over the sky, with every prospect of a coming storm, and yet everything still and sober in solemn tranquillity, often puts me in mind of those pauses in the busy course of life which precede some great and decisive event.

Such an evening was that which Lord H—— and Edith and Mr. Prevost spent together at the house where so many of these scenes have been laid, after quitting Fort Edward in the morning. Their journey had passed quite peaceably. They had encountered no human being but a few bands of friendly Indians going to join the army, and the ride, as everyone knows, was, and still is, a very beautiful one. It had occupied hardly four hours, and thus the principal part of the day had been spent in calm tranquillity in a scene endeared to all.

Mr. Prevost had retired to his room to write, and Lord H—— and Edith sat together in front of the house, gazing out toward the setting sun.

They talked of many things, some not at all connected

with the circumstances of the present or the future; they feared to dwell upon them too long, and they often sought relief in indifferent topics, but still the coming hour was vaguely present to the mind of each. It was like sitting near a waterfall, with the quiet, melancholy murmur of the cataract mingling harmoniously but sadly with every other sound.

"I trust, dear Edith, that we shall see them together," said Lord H——, speaking of distant lands where they both had birth. "There is many a lovely thing to be met with in the old world, both in nature and in art, and though I love these beautiful scenes well, and enjoy as much as anyone the magnificence of unadorned nature, yet methinks that is no reason why we should not appreciate to the full all that is fine and lovely, though of a different character. It is the narrow-minded man alone, the man of an uncaptious soul, who suffers one sort of excellence to take possession of his taste or heart. Beauty and goodness are infinitely varied, and though I may love some aspects best, yet I trust ever to be capable of deriving pleasure from each and all."

"But you have seen all these things, George," she answered. "Will it not weary you to go over them all again with so untutored a companion as myself?"

He gazed at her for a moment with a look of earnest affection, and gently pressed the hand he held in his. "I take a new light with me, Edith," he replied, "a light that will give new loveliness to everything that is beautiful. I have often thought, my beloved, that to see our own sensations—I mean happy ones: enjoyment, admiration, satisfaction—reflected from the mind of one so dear as you are to me, must be like beholding a loved scene reflected from the bosom of a calm lake, when every fair feature and bright hue acquires a magic luster and a brightness greater in the borrowed image than even in the tangible reality. These are happy dreams, Edith; let us trust to renew them some few weeks hence, and then, when-

ever this campaign is over, I will quit this busy, perilous game of war, if Edith will then be mine, and realize the visions we love so well. In the meanwhile, dear one, as everyone who goes into battle encounters certainly some peril, let us speak a word of the future in case the worst should befall. You will remember me, Edith, I am sure, if I should not return. I do not think you will ever love another so well; but remember, I am not so selfish in my love as to wish you to sacrifice the whole comfort and happiness of a life to the memory of one departed. Be happy when and in what way you can. Consult your own feelings solely, and I do believe that if spirits can look down on earth when parted from this frail body, your happiness, however it is attained, will add to mine; for I cannot believe that when we quit this earth we carry the selfishness of clay along with us."

The tears swam in Edith's eyes, and gemmed the long, black lashes round them, but they ran not over. "I have but one wish on earth, George," she answered, "when I think of the chances that you mention. It is that I may not survive you, even for an hour. If I had not known it could not be, I would have asked to go with you, in the hope that if you are to fall, one hour might take us both."

Lord H—— smiled sadly, and shook his head. "That might entail greater sorrows still," he answered, "and in no sense could it be, my Edith. No soldier should have his wife with him. While in the field he should be detached as much as possible from every thought but that of duty. I doubt, indeed, that he should have any tie to earth whatever, except those which God imposed upon him at birth. This is one reason why I shall quit the army. I am less fit to be a soldier than I was, but I should be utterly unfit if I thought you were in peril. From all apprehension on that score, indeed, I go free. I felt some uneasiness, indeed, while I thought that you were to remain alone here, with none but the servants round you. As matters are arranged at present, however, you will be quite safe with

Colonel Schneider and his wife. Besides his servants, the host of workmen employed in finishing his house and all the other works he has going on, will prove a little body-guard in itself."

"I should have felt myself perfectly secure here," replied Edith, "for the familiar aspect of all things round gives a sort of confidence which I could feel nowhere else. These Schneiders I hardly know, but if you and my father are better satisfied, I am content to be with them. What hour are we to set out to-morrow?"

"Between one and two o'clock," replied Lord H——, "will be quite time enough. The distance is but six miles, and your father and I can very well escort you thither and reach Fort Edward before night."

"I am glad of that," answered Edith. "To-morrow is the day that poor Captain Brooks is to be here. I should much like to see him once more, and I hope that he will arrive before we go. If not, I must tell the servants to provide for him well, and show him every kindness. Oh, George, is it not terrible to think of his encountering such a fate? The very idea of providing his last meals for him when going to a voluntary death makes my heart sink with horror and regret."

"The only chance is between him and poor Walter," answered Lord H——; "and we must not forget that this act of Woodchuck's has not been pressed or even asked by us. He judges, and judges rightly, I think, that it would be ungenerous to allow Walter to suffer for his acts; and though I would not urge him to adopt the course he has chosen, I certainly would say nothing to dissuade him."

"His self-devotion only makes it more terrible," answered Edith, "at least in my eyes, and yet I cannot help hoping," she continued, looking up inquiringly in her lover's face, "that something may occur. Why should I not say that something would be provided to rescue them both without this awful sacrifice?"

Lord H—— would say nothing to quell a hope which he

thought would give relief, but yet he did not share it; for his faith was less than Edith's—man's faith always is less than woman's.

Not many minutes more passed before Mr. Prevost rejoined them, speaking to one of the servants as he entered, in a calm but rapid tone, and giving various orders and directions for the morrow. Although not likely to be exposed so much as if entrusted with a military command, some danger, of course, attended the mere fact of his accompanying the army, and he had spent the last hour or two in making many arrangements, in view of probable death.

All the proceedings of the following day were then definitely arranged. After a hasty dinner he and Lord H—, with the four mounted men who accompanied them, and Edith's old traveling companion, Chaudo, were to escort her to the dwelling of Colonel Schneider, the new house built that spring, even farther in the wild than that of Mr. Prevost, of which the Indians on the hill had spoken. There, leaving her at once, the two gentlemen were to return to the camp, which they calculated upon reaching before nightfall.

The night passed quietly; day followed, and while Edith was dressing she saw from her window the expected figure of Woodchuck walking toward the door, with a firmer tread and a more resolute and easy bearing than he displayed when he had last appeared. On descending, she found him talking with her father and Lord H—, with perfect calmness and ease. His look was firm and self-possessed, his air was bold, though tranquil, and he seemed to have gained health since she saw him last. Edith was almost tempted to believe that some happy change of circumstances had taken place, but his first words dispelled her illusion.

"No, I thank you, Mr. Prevost," he said, "I must go on. I'll just take some breakfast with you, and then begin my march. I have calculated well my time, and should

like to have a day or two to go and come upon. It does not do to leave things to the last. I guess I shall leave Johnson Castle to-night. Then, mayhap, I shall get a lift up the river in a canoe. But, at all events, even if I am obliged to foot it all the way, I shall be in time."

Mr. Prevost looked down, and fell into thought, while Woodchuck advanced to Edith, shook hands with her, and spoke upon indifferent subjects. She now remarked that he was dressed in different guise from that which he had assumed during the winter. A light brown hunting shirt, loose in the body and the sleeves, seemed to be his principal garment; and in the belt which bound it round him was stuck the tomahawk and scalping knife of an Indian. His rifle stood in one corner of the room. On his head he wore a fur cap, as usual, and a pouch and powder horn, with moccasins on his feet, completed his equipment.

"Well, general," he said, turning to Lord H——, "I saw some of your people as I came up the river. There had been a fuss about batteaux, but I showed them how they could find some, for a set of knaves, more French than English at their hearts, had drawn a crowd of them up the creek. So Abercrombie and the rest are all up at Fort Edward by this time."

Lord H—— looked toward Mr. Prevost, but he was still in thought, and only roused himself to lead the way into the hall to breakfast. Woodchuck ate heartily; but to touch a single mouthful was a hard task for the other three. While still at the table, however, the sound of horses' feet galloping up to the door was heard, and Lord H——, starting up, looked out of the window. There were a young officer and a trooper of dragoons at the door; and the moment the former saw Lord H—— he handed him in a letter by the window, dismounting and entering the moment after, himself. By this time the despatch had been read by the young nobleman and Mr. Prevost, and the latter exclaimed: "This is most unfortunate! An immediate recall, Edith! We must not delay a moment, for the march commences

to-morrow at daybreak! Get ready as fast as possible, my love. We will see you safely to Colonel Schneider's, and then gallop back to the fort."

"Excuse me for observing," said the young officer, "that the order is peremptory. Of course, his lordship will judge for himself, but I only follow General Abercrombie's commands in saying that he wishes not a moment's delay."

"But my daughter, sir, my daughter!" said Mr. Prevost.

The young gentleman bowed stiffly, but made no answer, and the countenance of Lord H—— was very grave.

"Surely," said Mr. Prevost, "'twould be no great disobedience of orders to see my daughter safely to the house of my friend, Colonel Schneider, a distance of not more than six miles?"

"Which would take nearly two hours to go and come," said the young officer, drily, "at least over roads such as these. But you and his lordship are the best judges. I do not presume to dictate, and only convey to you the commander-in-chief's orders."

"Leave her to my care, Prevost," said Woodchuck, starting up. "I will see her safe. It's all in my way. Some of the servants can go with us, and there is no danger."

"I am in no fear, indeed, my dear father," said Edith. "Do not risk a censure. I shall be quite safe with our friend here."

"I believe, indeed, you will," said Lord H——; "otherwise I should be tempted to disobey, myself. But the terms of this despatch are so pressing that unless there were immediate and positive peril I think we are bound to return to camp at once."

He spoke aloud, and very gravely; but then, advancing to Edith's side, he added a few words in a lower tone. Mr. Prevost walked up and joined in their conversation, a sufficient indication, it might have seemed, that they wished for a few moments' privacy. Woodchuck understood, and advanced quietly to the door, for natural delicacy of feeling

is but the reality of that of which politeness is the shadow. But the young officer, who was of that coarse, common stuff of which martinets are ultimately made, still kept his ground, till Lord H——, somewhat provoked, turned round and said: "Captain Lumley, you will have the goodness to return to headquarters, and inform the commander-in-chief that his orders shall be peremptorily obeyed."

The young man paused a moment, with a look of surprise and discontent, and a moment or two after, when he passed Woodchuck at the door of the house, he was muttering: "Without asking me to take any refreshment."

His murmurs were, perhaps, natural; for those who concede least to the feelings of others invariably exact most for their own.

It is true that Lord H——, occupied with thoughts that engrossed him altogether, dismissed the aide-de-camp without remembrance of his needs, as well as without any feeling of resentment, and omitted a courtesy which no resentment, assuredly, could have curtailed. But the young man, swelling with indignation and offended dignity, mounted sullenly, and proceeded but slowly on his way. He had not gone one-half the distance, however, between Mr. Prevost's house and Fort Edward, when Lord H—— and the commissary passed him at great speed; and he did not reach headquarters till half an hour after they had announced their own return.

CHAPTER XXV

THE storm prognosticated from the red aspect of the setting sun the night before had not descended when Edith Prevost left the door of her father's house. No raindrops fell, no breeze even stirred the trees, and it was only a sort of misty obscurity to the westward which gave token, to eyes well acquainted with the forest, that the promise of the preceding sunset would yet be fulfilled. Overhead all was clear and blue, and the sun, though there was some haze around the broad disk, was powerful for the season of the year.

Edith's companions were only Chaudo the negro, the good woman Sister Bab (whose kindness, faithfulness and intelligence had all been tried), and Woodchuck, who refused to take a horse from the stable, but set out on foot by the beautiful girl's side.

"You can't canter a step of the way, Miss Edith," he said, "so I can keep up with you, I guess; for the road, such as it is, is better fitted for two feet than four."

There were tears in Edith's eyes as she turned from the door, arising from many a mingled source. She had seen her father and him whom she loved as well, though differently, depart suddenly to danger and to battle. Her brother was far away; and still she could not help thinking him in peril. Not only was the future of all uncertain—for that the future of everyone is—but the uncertainty was dark, and, as it were, more tangible than is generally the case with the dim, misty valley of the coming time. There was not only a cloud, but the cloud was threatening.

The moment of departing from her father's door was one of those pausing places of the mind for Edith Prevost. She did not cast her thoughts far back; she took in but a little range; six months was the limit. But she remembered how calmly happy she had been in that dwelling six months before.

She mused sadly, gazing down upon the horse's neck, and hardly seeing or thinking of the way she took. In the meantime, Woodchuck trudged on by her side, with his head erect, his face lifted toward the sky, his pace steady and assured. Edith suddenly and almost unconsciously turned her eyes toward him. There was a tranquil elevation of his countenance, a lofty resolution in his look, which gave her thoughts, in a moment, another direction. She was parting from a well loved home and cherished associations, with some clouds hanging over her, some anxieties dogging her path, but with a probability of soon returning, and with many a sweet promise of future happiness. Yet she was sad and downcast. He was marching onward, wittingly and voluntarily, to a certain and terrible death; and yet his march was tranquil, firm, and resolute. She felt ashamed of her tears. Nay, more, as thought ran on, she said to herself: "There is something more in life—something higher, nobler, grander, than any human passion, than any mortal enjoyment, than any mere earthly peace can give—something that comes from heaven to aid and support us in our struggles here below. He knows, he feels that he is doing his duty, that he is acting according to the commandment of his God, and he is calm and firm in the presence of death, and in the separation from all earthly things. And I—what have I to suffer? What have I to fear in comparison with him?"

She made a great effort, she shook off her sadness, she wiped the tears from her eyes, and said a few words to her companion in a quiet tone. He answered briefly to her actual words, but then turned at once to the feelings which he believed to be in her heart.

"Ah, Miss Prevost," he said, "it's a sad thing for a young lady like you to part for the first time with those she loves when they are going to battle, and I don't know that a woman's heart ever gets rightly accustomed to it; but it don't do to love anything too well in this world—no, not even one's own life. It's a sad stumbling block, both in the way of our duty and our happiness. Not that I'd have people keep from loving anything; that would never do. They wouldn't be worth having if they couldn't love their friends, and love them very well; but I guess the best way is to recollect always when we've got a thing, that it is but a loan—life itself all the same as everything else. It's all lent—all will be recalled. But only you see, my dear young lady, we've got a promise that if we use what we've lent to us well, it shall be given to us forever hereafter; and that should always be a comfort to us—it is to me."

A slight sigh followed his words, and he walked on in silence for a minute or two, probably pursuing the course which he had laid down for himself in his very excellent philosophy, of marching on straight to a high object, and casting from him all thought of the unavoidable sufferings of the way. Soon after, he looked up to the sky and said: "It's getting wonderfully black out there. I shouldn't wonder if we had a flaw of wind and a good soaking rain. I say, Master Chaudo, put that bearskin over the young lady's baggage and hold the horse better in hand, or you'll have him down amongst these stumps. You ride better than you lead, my friend."

The negro grinned at him, but did as he was directed, and a few minutes after they issued out of the wood upon a small open space of ground extending over the side of a slight eminence. The view thence was prolonged far to the westward in a clear day, showing some beautiful blue hills at the distance of some eight or nine miles. Those hills, however, had now disappeared, and in their place was seen what can only be called a dense black cloud, al-

though those words give a very inadequate idea of the sight which presented itself to Edith's eyes. It was like a gigantic wall of black marble, with a faint, irregular line at the top. But this wall evidently moved, coming forward with vast rapidity, although where the travelers were not a breath of air was felt. On it rushed toward them, swallowing up everything, as it were, in its own obscurity. Each instant some tree, some undulation of the ground, some marking object in the prospect, disappeared in its deep, gloomy shadow, and for a few moments Edith sat still upon her horse, gazing in awe, and even in terror. Woodchuck himself seemed for an instant overpowered, but then he caught Edith's rein and turned her horse, exclaiming: "Back, Miss Prevost! Back as fast as possible! That's the blackest cloud I ever see in all my days. There! there! to the eastward! Get under them big old hemlocks! Keep away from the pines and the small trees! It'll need to have been fastening to the ground for a hundred years to stand what's coming!"

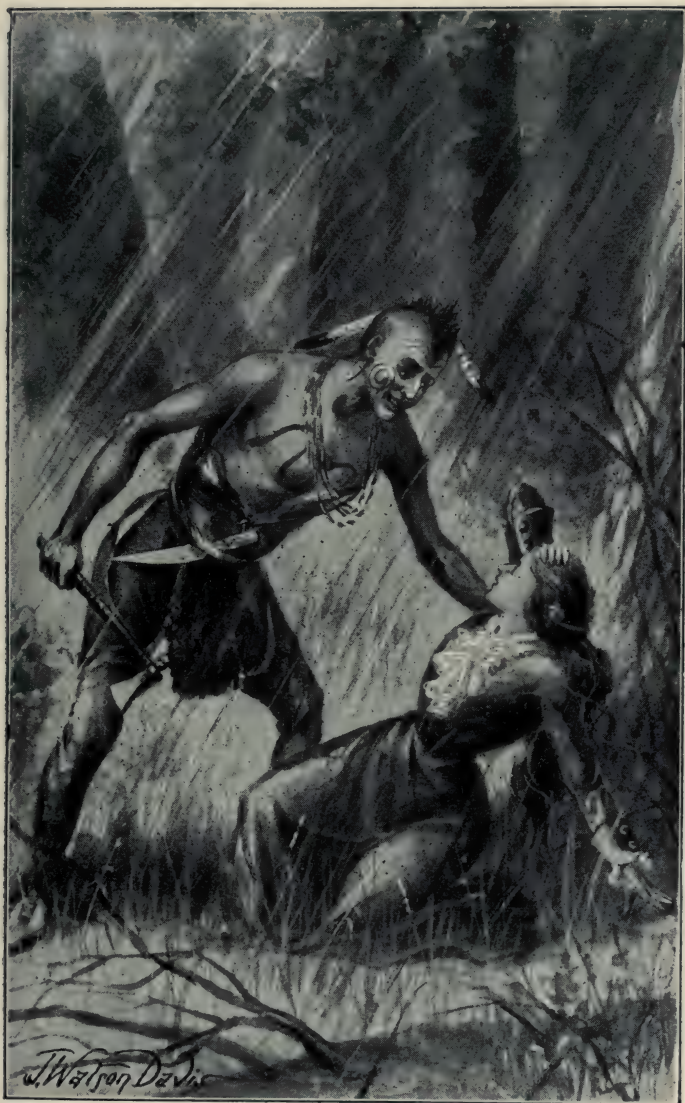
As he spoke he ran on fast by the side of Edith's horse till they reached the edge of the wood, and there he checked her. "Not too far in! not too far in! You must be ready to jump out if you find that even these old fellows commence crashing!"

He then left her bridle and walked carefully round several of the trees, examining their trunks and roots with a very critical eye, to ascertain that they were firmly fixed, and not decayed, and then approaching Edith again, he held out his hand, saying: "Jump down! Here's one will do. He must ha' stood many a hard storm and bitter blast, and p'raps will bear this one, too; for he's as sound as when he started up, a little twig, before the eyes of any mortal man now living winked in the sunshine—aye! or his father's, either. There, Chaudo, take the horses and grip them all tight, for depend upon it they'll caper when the wind and rain come. Now, my dear, put yourself on this side of the tree, keep close to it, and listen well. You may

find him shiver and sway a bit, but don't mind that, for he's not so tall as the rest, and twice as stout; and what makes me trust him is that in some storm his head has been broken off and his feet have stood stout. He won't catch so much wind as the others, and I think he'd stand it if he did. But if you hear him begin to crack, jump clear out here to the left, into the open ground. They'll fall t'other way. If you keep close, the branches won't strike you when they fall, and the rain won't get at you, for it's taking a long sweep."

The next moment it came. The wind, blowing with the force of a hurricane, rushed over the valley below; the leaves were torn off, the small twigs, with their umbrageous covering, carried aloft into the air and scattered; a few large drops of rain fell, and then the whole force of the tempest struck the hillside and the more open space where Edith stood. In an instant the scene of confusion and destruction was indescribable. The gusts seemed to hiss as they passed through the branches of the trees and between the tall stems. Large branches were torn off and scattered far; the young pines and birches bent before the force of the storm. As in the case of war and pestilence, the weak, and the sickly, and the young, and the decayed, suffered first and most. Wherever the roots had not got a firm hold of the ground, wherever the frosts of the winter and the thawing of the spring, or the heavy rains had washed away the earth, or loosened it, the trees came thundering and crashing down, and the din was awful, the howling wind, the breaking branches, the falling trees, all joining in the roar; and a moment after the pattering rain, rustling and rushing amongst the withered leaves left by the winter, becoming thicker and more dense every moment, seemed more as if a river was falling down from the sky, hardly separated into drops, than a fertilizing shower passing over the landscape.

Edith gazed round her in affright, for she could, as Woodchuck had predicted, feel the enormous but low-



Edith felt a strong arm seize her by the shoulder, and turning her head in terror, she beheld the gleaming eyes of an Indian.

—*Ticonderoga*.

stemmed hemlock against which he had placed her, tremble and quiver with the blast; and a number of trees hard by were rooted up and cast prostrate, bearing the turf and earth in which they had stood up into the air, while here and there some more firmly fixed in the ground, but defective higher up, snapped in the middle, and then the whole upper part was carried many yards away. But though she gazed, little was the distance she could see, so thick and black was the covering of the sky; while all around, what between the close-falling deluge and a sudden mist rising up from the ground, the sort of twilight that the storm cloud left was rendered still more murky and obscure.

The two negroes, as usual with that race, were clamorous and excited, adding the noise of their tongues to the roar of the tempest; but the horses, contrary to the expectation of Woodchuck, seemed cowed and paralyzed by fear. Instead of attempting to break loose and rushing away, they merely turned from the wind and rain, and with hoofs set firm, and drooping heads, abode the storm, with now and then a shivering thrill, showing the terror that they felt. Woodchuck himself stood silent, close by Edith, leading his strong shoulder against the tree, and, with his eyes bent down upon the ground, seemed to lose himself in heavy thought. A man who has parted with the world and the world's hopes is tempest-proof.

After the first rush of the storm there came a lull, and then another fierce roar, and more falling trees and crashing branches. The whole forest swayed and bent like the harvest in a breeze, and down came the torrent from the sky more furiously than ever. But in the midst of it all Woodchuck started, leaned his head a little to one side, and seemed to listen, with his eye fixed upon vacancy.

"What is the matter?" asked Edith, alarmed by his look.

"I thought I heard a footfall," he answered.

"In the roar of such a storm?" said Edith. "It must have been some falling branch."

He only smiled for an answer, but still he listened, and she could see him lift his arm a little from the lock of his rifle, on which it had been tightly pressed, and look down upon it to see that it was dry.

The next moment, however, he resumed his ordinary attitude, and said in a quiet tone: "It's all nonsense, however. The Ingians are all quiet and friendly on this side of the lake. But you see, Miss Prevost, I have been so many months on the watch every minute, not knowing whether I should not feel the scalping knife or the tomahawk the next, that I've got over-wary. The Mohawks are all on the move about here, and no Hurons or any other of the enemies would venture across, except in a large body, to fight a regular battle. It must have been the tread of some friendly Ingian I heard, though they don't usually leave the trail except they've some object in view."

"But is it possible you could hear anything distinctly amidst this awful noise?" asked Edith. "Are you sure you are not mistaken?"

"Oh, no, I'm not likely to be mistaken," answered Woodchuck. "One's ears get sharp with continued listening. I'm putty sure it was a foot I heard, and a man's foot, too. It seemed to be as if it had slipped off a loose stone hidden under the leaves, and came down harder, perhaps, than he expected. But that's no proof that he meant mischief, for they've all got those cat-like sort of ways, creeping about silently, whether there's 'casion for it or not; and as I said just now, they're all friendly here on this side of Horicon."

A few moments' silence succeeded, while the wind again swelled up, raged for a minute or two, and then fell again; and Woodchuck, putting out his head from beyond the shelter of the great trunk, observed: "It seems to me to be getting a little clearer there to the westward. I guess it won't last more nor half an hour longer."

Almost as he spoke, from every side but that which opened upon the hill, came a yell, so loud, so fierce, so fiend-

like, that ere she knew what she was doing, under the sudden impulse of terror, Edith darted at once away from the tree into the open space, and ran a few steps till her long riding dress caught round her small feet, and she fell upon the grass. At the same instant she felt a strong arm seize her by the shoulder and heard the rattle of a rifle, and turning her head in mute terror, she beheld the gleaming eyes and dark countenance of an Indian, rendered more hideous by the half-washed off war paint, bending over her. His tomahawk was in his right hand; her last hour seemed come, but so sudden, so confounding had been the attack that she could not collect her ideas. She could not speak, she could not think, she could not pray. The weapon did not fall, however, and the savage dragged her up from the ground and gazed upon her, uttering some of the uncouth exclamations of his people in tones of satisfaction and even merriment.

One hurried glance around for help showed Edith that all hope for help was vain; and no words can describe her horror at the scene she saw. At the very moment she looked round, a tomahawk in the hands of a gigantic Indian was falling on the head of the poor negro Chaudo, and the next instant a wild, shrieking yell told her his agony was come and gone. Woodchuck, hatchet in hand, was battling for life against another savage, and seemed nearly, if not quite, his match, but eight or ten more Indians were rushing up, yelling like wolves as they came, and in the midst of the struggle, while hatchets were playing and flashing round the heads of the combatants, a young and active Indian sprang upon the poor hunter from behind and threw him backward on the earth. He lay perfectly still and motionless, gazing up at the tomahawk lifted over his head; but at that instant the young Indian put his arm around his companion's naked breast and pushed him violently back, with a loud exclamation in the Iroquois tongue. Then seizing the hand of Woodchuck, he pulled up the sleeve of

his hunting shirt and pointed to a blue stripe tattooed upon his arm.

The lifted hand and tomahawk of the other sank slowly by his side, and Woodchuck sat up and gazed round him, but without attempting to rise altogether from the ground.

Some five or six of the Indians came quietly up, and some kneeling, some bending down, gazed upon the blue line, while the savage who had seized upon Edith dragged her forward to the spot, and still holding her fast, gazed likewise. A few quick and muttered words succeeded amongst their captors, some only of which Edith heard and understood.

"It's the sign! it's the sign!" said one. Then came a sentence or two that escaped her ear, and then another cried, "Ask him! Ask him!"

Then one of the Indians seated himself on the ground before Woodchuck, spread out his hands like a fan, and addressed some words to him, which Edith, notwithstanding her perfect knowledge of the Iroquois language in most of its dialects, did not in the least comprehend. The answer of Woodchuck was equally unintelligible to her, and the only word or words which she caught was "Honontkoh."

The moment he had spoken, two of the Indians placed their hands under his arms and raised him from the ground. They took the precaution of disarming him entirely, and then, gathering round, they talked quickly and eagerly in low tones; but now they spoke a language which Edith understood, and though she did not catch all that was said she heard enough to show her that they were discussing what was to be done with herself and Woodchuck, whom it seemed to her that from some cause they recognized as a brother. Suddenly the savage who held her pressed his fingers tighter upon her arm, exclaiming aloud in a fierce, angry voice: "She is mine! I will dispose of her as I please."

"No one will oppose the brother of the Snake," said

another elder man. "Scalp her, if thou wilt, but where canst thou carry her if thou dost not slay her?"

"Let us all go to the other side of Corlear, Apukwa," said the man who held her. "I will take her with me; she shall cook my venison for me. 'Twas for this I brought you hither."

"What! Shall we become women amongst the Hurons?" said Apukwa.

"No," replied the brother of the Snake; "there are many of our tribe and order there, of our own nation, outcasts like ourselves. We will become, like them, warriors of the great French king, and fight against the accursed Yengees."

"But how shall we cross?" said Apukwa.

"There are canoes in plenty," said the other. "Besides, our Canada brethren are here, close at hand, at Che-on-de-ro-ga. They will give us help."

A silent pause succeeded, and then Woodchuck stretched forth his arm, recovered from the confusion which perhaps the suddenness of the attack, perhaps the violence of his fall, had produced, and addressed them after their own fashion.

"Are we not brothers?" he said. "Are we not all Honontkoh? Are we not all bound by the dreadful name to aid each other, even unto blood and death? I demand, therefore—ye who have lifted the hatchet against us unjustly—to set me and this maiden free, to make our feet as the feet of the panther, to go whither we will. I have spoken the terrible words. I have uttered the dreadful name; the sign of the order is in my flesh, and ye dare not refuse!"

A look of doubt and hesitation came over the faces of the Indians, and Apukwa replied: "Whither wouldst thou go, my brother? We have all sworn the oath in the presence of the dark spirit that we will aid one another, and that each of the Honontkoh will defend and protect another, though he should have eaten fire or shed his brother's

blood. Thou hast shed our brother's blood; for we know thee, though we knew not that thou wert of our order. But we are Honontkoh, and we will keep the saying. We will defend thee; we will protect thee; but whither wouldst thou go?"

"I go," answered Woodchuck, with unfortunate frankness and truth, "I go to lay down my life for your brother's life. I go to the Castle of the Oneidas, to say: 'Woodchuck is here. Let the hatchet fall upon the old tree, and let the young sapling grow up till its time be come. I killed the Snake. Take the blood of him who slew him, and set the boy Walter free.' As for this maiden, she is mine. I have adopted her. I claim her, as brother claims from brother. Ye cannot be Honontkoh and take her from me. If ye be true to our order, give her into my hand, and let us go."

While he spoke, the countenances of the Indians round betrayed no mark of any emotion whatever, though there were many and varying feelings, undoubtedly, busy in their breasts. As he ended, however, a slight and somewhat scornful smile came upon the cunning face of Apukwa, and he replied: "We cannot let our brother go on such an errand. It would be contrary to our laws. We are bound to defend and protect him, and must not let him make wind of his life. The yellow leaf falls of itself from the bough; the green leaf is torn off by the tempest. We must preserve our brother's life, though the young man perish."

Edith's eyes wept fast with the bitterest drops of despair, but Apukwa went on: "As for the maiden, we will hear and judge more another day. Thou sayest thou hast adopted her. We will hear how, for we know her to be the daughter of the paleface Prevost. If she be the prize of the brother of the Snake, the brother of the Snake must have her. But if she be thy daughter, she is thine. Let her be with thee till we have heard all and judged. We have not room now; for time goes fast, and we are near danger. The palefaces are to the rising and setting sun, toward the cold and toward the soft wind. The Honontkoh is the

enemy of the paleface, the abandoned of the Mohawk, and the outcast of the Oneida. Take the maiden in thy hand, and go on toward the rising sun. We come with thee as thy brethren, and will preserve thy life."

Woodchuck gave an anxious glance to Edith, and said in a low voice and in English: "We can't resist, but we may outwit them. Come on for the present, for I guess it may be no better. I will shed my blood for you, my dear, if I cannot for your brother." And taking her hand, he led her on toward the northeast, preceded by one, and followed by five or six Indians, who, on their usual cautious plan, walked singly, one after another, well knowing that their prisoners could not escape them. Several remained upon the spot a few minutes longer, engaged in stripping the pack-horse of all that he carried, and taking the saddles and bridles of the other horses, which they knew would be valuable in the eyes of the French. All this was done with extraordinary rapidity, and then the last party followed the first into the depths of the wood.

By this time the wind had considerably abated, though it still rained hard. The moment after the Indians had departed, however, the leaves and branches of a large flower-covered bush, of the kalmia, growing under a low-spreading hemlock, moved gently, and the next instant a black face protruded. After one hasty glance around, the whole form of the negress, Sister Bab, was drawn slowly out from the bush, and running from tree to tree with silent speed, she stopped not till she caught sight again of the retiring Indians, and then followed them quietly and cautiously on their way toward Champlain.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE stillness of death pervaded the great lodge of the Oneidas, and yet it was not vacant. But Black Eagle sat in the outer chamber alone. With no eye to see him, with none to mark the traces of those emotions which the Indian so carefully conceals from observation, he gave way, in a degree, at least, to feelings which, however sternly hidden from others, wrought powerfully in his own heart. His bright blue and scarlet apparel, feathers and belt, medals and armlets, were thrown aside, and with his head bowed, his face full of gloomy sadness, and all the strong muscles of his beautifully proportioned figure relaxed, he sat like an exquisite figure sculptured in porphyry. No tear, indeed, bedewed his eyelids; no sigh escaped his lips; but the very attitude bespoke sorrow, and there was something awfully sad in the perfect, unvarying stillness of his form.

Oh! what a terrible strife was going on within! Grief is ten times more terrible to those who concentrate it in the heart than to those who pour it forth upon the wide air.

The door of the lodge opened. He started, and instantly was himself again; the head upright, the face clear, the aspect calm and dignified.

"Where hast thou been, my child?" asked the chief, gazing on his daughter as she entered, with feeling mingled of a thousand strong emotions—parental love, fond admiration, and manifold memories.

"Where thou hast permitted me to go, my father," she answered, with a smile so bland and sweet that a momentary suspicion crossed her father's mind.

"Thou hast not forgot thy promise, my Blossom?" he said, in a tone as stern as he ever used to her.

"Oh, no, my father," answered Otaita; "didst thou ever know me to do so? To see him—to be with him in his long captivity—to move the rock between us, and to let some light into his dark lodge. I promised, if thou wouldst let me stay with him a few short hours each day, I would do naught, try naught for his escape. Otaita has not a double tongue for her own father. Is Black Eagle's eye dim, that it cannot see his child's heart? Her heart is in his hand."

"How fares the boy?" asked her father. "Is there sunshine with him, or a cloud?"

"Sunshine," said Otaita, simply. "He sat and talked of death. It must be very happy."

The chief gazed at her silently for a few moments, and then asked: "Does he think so, too?"

"He makes me think so," answered the Blossom; "must it not be happy where there is no weeping, no slaughter, no parting of dear friends and lovers, where a Saviour and Redeemer is ever ready to mediate even for those who do such deeds?"

"The Great Spirit is good," answered Black Eagle, thoughtfully. "The happy hunting grounds are ever ready for those who die bravely in battle."

"For those who do good," said Otaita, with a sigh; "for those who spare their enemies, and show mercy—for those who obey even the voice of God in their own hearts, and are merciful and forgiving to their fellow men."

Black Eagle smiled. "A woman's religion," he said. "Why should I forgive my enemies? The voice of God you speak of, in my heart, teaches me to kill them; for if I did not, they would kill me."

"Not if they were Christians, too," said Otaita. "The voice of God tells all men to spare each other, to love each other; and if everyone obeyed it, there would be no such thing as enemies. All would be friends and brethren."

Black Eagle mused for a moment or two, and then answered: "But there are enemies, and therefore I must kill them."

"That is because men obey the voice of the evil spirit, and not that of the good," replied the Blossom. "Will my father do so? Black Eagle has the voice of the Good Spirit in his heart. He loves children, he loves his friends, he spares women, and has taught the Oneidas to spare them. All this comes from the the voice of the Good Spirit. Will he not listen to it farther?"

Her father remained lost in thought, and believing that she had carried something, Otaita went on to the point nearest to her heart. "The Black Eagle is just," she said; "he dispenses equity between man and man. Is it either just, or does it come from the voice of the Good Spirit, that he should slay one who has done good, and not harm; that he should kill a man for another man's fault? Even if it be permitted to him to slay an enemy, is it permitted to slay a friend? If the laws of the Oneidas are unjust, if they teach faithlessness to one who trusted them, if they are contrary to the voice of the Good Spirit, is not Black Eagle a great chief who can change them, and teach his children better things?"

Her father started up, and waved his hand impatiently. "No more!" he said; "no more! When I hear the voice of the Good Spirit, and know it, I will obey it; but our laws came from him, and I will abide by the sayings of our fathers."

As he spoke he strode to the door of the lodge and gazed forth, while Otaita wept in silence. She saw that it was in vain to plead farther, and gliding up to her father's side she touched his arm reverently with her hand.

"My father," she said, "I give thee back the permission to see him, and I take back my promise. Otaita will not deceive her father; but the appointed hour is drawing on, and she will save her husband if she can. She has laid no plan with him; she has found no scheme; she has

not spoken to him of safety or escape. She has deceived Black Eagle in nothing, and she now tells him that she will shrink from no way to save her brother Walter—no, not even from death itself!"

"Koui! koui!" said the chief, in a tone of profound melancholy. "Thou canst do nothing." Then, raising his head suddenly, he added: "Go, my daughter; it is well. If thy mother has made thee soft and tender as a flower, thy father has given thee the courage of the eagle. Go in peace; do what thou canst; but thou wilt fail!"

"Then will I die!" said Otaitsa; and gliding past him, she sought her way through the huts.

The first door she stopped at was partly covered with strange paintings in red and blue colors, representing, in somewhat grotesque forms, men and animals, and flowers. She entered at once, without hesitation, and found, seated in the dim twilight, before a large fire, the old chief who had spoken last at the council of the chiefs, in the glen. His ornaments bespoke a chief of high degree, and several deep scars in his long, meager limbs showed that he had been known in the battlefield. He did not even look round when Blossom entered, but still sat gazing at the flickering flame, without the movement of a limb or feature. Otaitsa seated herself before him, and gazed at his face in silence, waiting for him to speak. At the end of not less than five minutes he turned his head a little, looked at her, and asked: "What would the Blossom of the old Cedar Tree?"

"I would take counsel with wisdom," said the girl. "I would hear the voice of the warrior who is just, and the great chief who is merciful. Let him whom my mother revered most, after her husband, among the children of the Stone, speak words of comfort to Otaitsa."

Then, in language which, in rich imagery, and even in peculiarities of style, had a striking resemblance to the Hebrew writings, she poured forth to him all the circumstances of Walter's capture, and of their love and plighted

faith; and, with the same arguments which we have seen already used, she tried to convince him of the wrong and injustice done to her lover.

The old man listened with the usual appearance of apathy, but the beautiful girl before him gathered that he was much moved at heart, by the gradual bending down of his head, till his forehead nearly touched his knees.

When she ceased, he remained silent for several moments, according to their custom, and then raised his head and answered: "How can the old Cedar Tree help thee?" he asked. "His boughs are withered, and the snows of more than seventy winters have bent them down. His roots are shaken in the ground, and the first blast of the tempest will lay him low. But the law of the Oneidas is in his heart; he cannot change it or pervert it. By thine own saying, it is clear that the Good Spirit will do nothing to save this youth. The young warrior is the first they lay hands on. No means have been found for his escape. No paleface has come into the Oneida land who might be made to take his place. All thine efforts to rescue him have been seeds that bore no fruit. Did the Good Spirit wish to save him, he would provide a means. I have no counsel, and my heart is dead, for I loved thy mother as a child. She was to me as the evening star, coming from afar to shine upon the nights of my days. But I have no way to help her child, no words to give her comfort. Has not the Black Eagle a sister, who loved thy mother well, who has seen well nigh as many winters as I have, and who has a charm from the Great Spirit? Her lodge is even now filled with wise women of the tribe, taking counsel together as to this matter of the young chief. All love him well, except the dark and evil Honontkoh; all would save him, whether man or woman of the nation, were not the law of the Oneida against him. Go to her lodge, then, and with her take counsel, for the Cedar Tree is without words."

The lodge of Black Eagle's sister was next in size and importance to that of the chief himself, and on it, too, some

European skill had been expended. Though on a somewhat smaller scale, it was very much such another building as that which has been described by a writer of those days as the "Palace of King Hendrick," the celebrated chief of the Mohawks. In a word, "It had the appearance of a good barn, divided across by a mat hung in the middle." It was of but one story, however; but the workman who had erected it, a good many years before, on the return from the completion of Fort Oswego, had added a door of European form, with a latch and a brass knob, which greatly increased its dignity in the eyes of the tribe.

The possessor of this mansion, who was held in great reverence all through the Oneida nation, and was supposed to hold communication with the spiritual world, had obtained, I know not how, the name of the Gray Dove, although her features by no means displayed the characteristic meekness of the bird from which she derived her appellation, but bore a considerable resemblance to those of her brother, which certainly well accorded with his name.

When Otaitsa approached the door she found it fastened, and she knocked twice with her hand before it was opened. A young girl then peeped out, and seeing the sachem's daughter, gave her admission at once into the outer apartment. The space on the outer side of the large mat which formed the partition was vacant, but there was a murmur of voices coming from the division beyond, and a light shone through the crevices between the mat and the wall.

The feelings of Otaitsa's heart were too powerful to leave any timidity in her bosom, and although she shared in some degree the feelings of awe with which the other Oneidas regarded the Gray Dove, she advanced at once, drew back the corner of the mat, and entered the chamber beyond. The scene was neither of a very beautiful nor of a very solemn character, but nevertheless there was something very striking in it. Seated around a large fire in the middle were a number of the elder women of the

tribe, whose faces and forms, once, perhaps, fair and lovely, had lost almost every trace of beauty. But their features were strongly marked, and had in many instances a stern and almost fierce expression. Their eyes, jetty black, and in most cases as brilliant as in early youth, shone in the light of the fire like diamonds, and in many an attitude and gesture appeared much of that grace which lingers longer with people accustomed to a free and unconfined life than with those of rigid and conventional habits.

Outside of the first and elder circle sat a number of the younger women, from fifteen or sixteen years of age up to five or six and twenty. Many of them were exceedingly beautiful, but the figures of their elder companions shaded them mostly from the glare of the fire, and it was only here and there that one of those countenances could be discovered which offer in many of the Indian tribes fit models for painter or sculptor. Seated, not on the ground, like the rest, but on a small settle at the farther side of the inner circle, appeared Black Eagle's sister, gorgeously dressed, almost entirely in crimson, with armlets and bracelets of gold, and innumerable glittering ornaments round her neck. She was much older than her brother, and her hair, almost as white as snow, was knotted up behind on the ordinary roller, without any decoration. Her features were aquiline, and much more prominent than those of Black Eagle, and her eyes were still keen and bright. The moment they lighted upon Otaita, the exclamation burst from her lips: "She is come! The Great Spirit has sent her! Stand there in the midst, Blossom, and hear what we have resolved."

Otaita passed between two of the younger and two of the elder women, taking her place between the inner circle and the fire, and wonderfully bright and beautiful did she look, with the flame flashing upon her exquisite form and delicate features, and lighting up a countenance full of strong enthusiasm and pure emotions.

"Thy child hears thy words," she said, without pause or

hesitation; for it must be remarked that the stoical gravity which prevailed at the conferences of the chiefs and warriors was not thought necessary among the women of the tribes. "What has the Gray Dove to say to the daughter of her brother?"

"The boy must not die," said the old woman, in a firm and decided tone. "It is not the will of the Great Spirit. Or, if he die, there shall be wailing in every lodge, and mourning amongst the children of the Stone. Art thou willing, Otaita, child of the Black Eagle, daughter of the flower of the East, to do as we do, and to obey my voice?"

Otaita gazed round the circle, and saw stern and lofty determination written on every countenance.

After gazing round them for an instant, she answered: "I am. I will do what thou sayest to save him, even unto death!"

"She has said!" cried the old woman. "Now, then, Blossom, this is the task: Thou shalt watch eagerly as a fox upon the hillside, and bring word to me of the exact day and hour when the sacrifice is to be offered. Everyone must watch!"

"But how shall I discover?" asked Otaita. "The warriors tell not their secrets to women. The Black Eagle hides his thoughts from his daughter; he covers his face with a cloud, and wraps his purposes in shadows from our eyes."

"By little signs shalt thou know," said the Gray Dove. "Small clouds prognosticate great storms. When thou seest any change, mark it well. If his head droop, and his eye seeks the ground more than common, bring or send the tidings unto me. If he be silent when he should speak, and hears not the words thou utterest; if he gazes up to the heaven as if he were seeking to know the changes of the weather when all is clear; and if he looks at the tomahawk as it hangs upon the beam, with a dull and heavy eye, be sure the time is coming."

Otaita gave a wild start, and exclaimed: "Then it is

this night, for all the signs thou hast mentioned have been present. When I entered the lodge his head was bowed down, and his eyes fixed upon the ground. He was very sad. He heard me, but his thoughts seemed to wander. When he stopped my petitions and turned toward the door, his eyes rested gloomily on the hatchet; and when he stood without, they were lifted to the sky, as if looking for stars in the daytime. It is to-night! It is to-night! Oh, what shall be done?"

"Nay," answered the Gray Dove, with a kindly look, "it is not to-night. Be composed, my child. Not until to-morrow, at the hour of twilight, will the six moons have passed away, and the Black Eagle speaks no word in vain. He will not lift the tomahawk a moment before the hour; but to-morrow will be the time, after the sun has set. The palefaces have taken the warpath against each other, and the allies of the Black Eagle have called upon him to take wing and help them. They have bid him paint himself for battle, and come forth with his warriors. He has waited but for this, and now we know the day and the hour; for he will not tarry."

Otaitsa still trembled, but her mind was much relieved for the present. She knew her father well, and she saw the truth of what the Gray Dove said. "How shall we stay him?" she inquired. "The Black Eagle bends not in his way like the serpent; he goes straight upon his path like a bird in the air. He hears not the voice of entreaty; his ears are stopped against the words of prayer. You may turn the torrent as it rushes down after the melting of the snow, or the rock as it falls from the precipice, but you cannot arrest the course of the Black Eagle, or turn him from his way!"

"Be firm and constant," said the Gray Dove. "We are in the hands of the Great Spirit. Watch him closely, Otaitsa, all to-morrow, from the midday till the setting sun—from the setting sun till the dawn, if it be needful. The moment he goes forth, come then to me at the lodge

of the Lynx, by the western gate of the palisade; there shalt thou find me with others. I know that thy young heart is strong, and that it will not quail. Watch carefully, but watch secretly. See if he takes the tomahawk in his belt, and if his face be gay or gloomy. Mark every sign, and bring the news to me."

"They may go off by the other gate, and steal round," said one of the women in the inner circle. "I will set my daughter, now waiting, to watch that gate and bring us tidings. She is still and secret as the air of night, and has the foot of the wind."

"It is good," said the Gray Dove, rising. "Let us all be prepared, for the boy must not die."

No more was said, for the old prophetess fell into one of those deep and solemn reveries from which all present knew she could not easily be wakened, and which probably had acquired for her the reputation of conversing with the spirit world which she possessed. One by one, slowly and silently, the women stole out of the lodge, dispersing in various directions the moment they quitted the door. Otaita remained the last, in the hope that the Gray Dove would speak again, and afford her some further information of her plans; but she continued silently gazing on the fire, with her tall figure erect and stiff, and probably perfectly unconscious of the departure of the others, till at length the Blossom followed the rest, and returned quietly to the great lodge.

The following day broke dark and stormy. About three o'clock in the afternoon a sharp, cold wind succeeded to the mild breath of spring, and the Indians generally remained assembled round their fires, leaving the wide space within the palisade very nearly deserted. Shortly before sunset one Indian woman crept quietly forth, and took her way toward a hut near the eastern entrance of their village. Another followed very speedily, and when twilight had ended and night begun, no less than twelve stood beneath the roof, with the Gray Dove in the midst of them. It

was too dark for anyone to see the face of another, for the night had fallen heavily and thick, and a blanket was stretched across the entrance. But the Gray Dove felt them one after another with her hands, asking a question of each, to which she seemed to receive a satisfactory answer.

"The thirteenth is not here," she said, "but she will come, and her heart will not fail."

A dead silence fell over them all after these words were spoken; that sort of stern, heavy, solemn silence which not unfrequently precedes the execution of some strong and terrible resolution. Yet of those twelve there were several gay and lively girls, as well as women fallen into the decline of life; but nevertheless all were as still as death. The volatile lightness of youth, as well as the garrulity of old age, was hushed.

Suddenly, after they had waited some twenty minutes, the blanket was pushed aside, and another figure was added to the number. The voice of Otaitisa whispered: "He has gone forth, armed as if for battle; he has his tomahawk with him; his face is very sad. I saw the Old Cedar Tree cross to the west gate, and others whom I knew not in the darkness."

She spoke in eager haste, and gasped for breath; but the old woman took her by the arm, saying: "Be calm! Be still! Now follow noiselessly. Then down as you pass through the maize, though in this black night who shall see us?"

She was the first to issue forth; then came Otaitisa, and the others followed, one by one, with quick but silent steps, through the wide field of maize that swept round the palisade, and then into the neighboring forest. Once, when they came near a spot where the polished mirror of the lake collected and cast back every ray of light that remained in the air, they caught sight of a dark file, shadowy and ghostlike as themselves, moving on at a little distance, in the same direction. But it was soon lost; and the sight only served to hasten their footsteps. Passing along a

trail which cut across the neck of a little wooded promontory, they suddenly came in sight of the lake again, and by its side a low Indian hut, marked out plainly against the surface of the water. When within some thirty yards, the Gray Dove halted, whispered a word or two to those who followed, and then, bending down, crept closer to the lodge.

"Oh, let us hasten!" whispered Otaita. "They are already there! I hear my father speaking!"

"Hush! hush! Be still!" said the old woman, in the same tone. "The Black Eagle will do nothing hastily; it is for him a solemn rite. Let me first get near; then follow, and do what I do."

CHAPTER XXVII

It was a sad and weary day to poor Walter Prevost, for he was without consolation. The time of his long imprisonment, indeed, had been less burdensome than might have been supposed, although during the first two or three weeks many a fruitless effort to escape had wearied his spirit. He learned, however, that it was impossible; he was too closely and too continually watched. There was nothing to prevent his quitting the hut; but the moment he did so, whether by night or day, he was met by two or three armed Indians. They were kind and courteous to him, though they suffered him not to bend his steps in the direction of their Castle or village, nor to approach the lake, to the banks of which many a canoe was moored. Sometimes one of them would take him to hunt; but two or three others followed, and never separated from his side. They were not fond of speaking of his probable fate and situation, and generally avoided the subject with true Indian skill. But once a young warrior, less experienced than the rest, related to him the messages which the great chief had sent by the runner Proctor; and Walter learned the decision regarding his own fate, and the chances on which it hung. But that young Indian was never seen near him more, and it was evident that he was looked upon as having betrayed counsel, and had been removed. But about that time the greatest solace and balm he could receive was afforded him. Otaita suddenly appeared in the hut, and told him that by promising to make no personal effort for his rescue, and to take no advantage of the freedom granted her to facilitate his escape by her own efforts, she had obtained per-

mission to visit him two hours each day. She had explained to him, however, that others, in whom she trusted, were busy in his cause, and that the Gray Dove herself, on whom all her people looked with the greatest reverence, had positively assured her he should not die.

At first their interviews were sad enough. Hope and fear kept up their battle in the heart; but in time these emotions passed away, and love and happiness were all that remained; or, if aught of fear mingled with those blessings, it was but enough, as it were, to sanctify their intercourse, to purify it of some portion of earthly passion; so that, while they sat twined in each other's arms, their conversation would often be of death, and future life and happiness unmingled. She often called him "husband" to her father, but it was always "brother" when they were alone.

Day after day, beneath the sunshine or the cloud, over the snow or the green earth, Otaita visited the hut; but she had grown anxious as the days rolled on. She had not calculated the time accurately, but she knew that the appointed day was near and Walter was not delivered. She accused herself of folly in having trusted to others, though she saw not how, watched as he was, his deliverance could be effected by herself. But she resolved now to bestir herself, and if she lost her life in the attempt, to make one last great effort to set him free.

Such was her resolution on the preceding day, when, on parting with him, she whispered in his ear, lest anyone should be listening without: "I shall not come to you again, my brother, till I come to save you. I know not how it will be, but if I fail, Walter will not be long in heaven ere Otaita seeks him there."

He hardly believed she could keep her resolution of abstaining from at least one more interview; but the weary day passed by, the Indians who brought him food and fire appeared and disappeared, the rain fell heavily, the wind shook the hut, and Otaita did not come.

At length the night began to fall, stern, gloomy, dark.

A rayless sunset, a brief twilight, and then utter darkness. His spirit sank low indeed; his heart felt heavy and oppressed. He bent him down, stirred up the embers of his fire, piled more wood upon it, and kindled a bright, cheerful blaze. But it had no effect in raising his spirits, or warming his heart. All within him was cheerless. He sat and gazed into the fire, and thought of his absent home, and of the pleasant days of youth, and of the sweet dreams he had once cherished, the hopes that hung, like faded pictures, upon the wall of memory. A thousand little incidents, a thousand delightful recollections, came back upon him as he sat and meditated, as if merely to make life more dear, when, suddenly, on the other side of the hut, a dark figure crossed the firelight, and then another, and another, and another, till they numbered six. They were all chiefs and men of lofty mien, but stern, and grave, and silent. They seated themselves in a semi-circle, at the very farther end of the hut, and for several minutes remained profoundly still.

He understood at once what it all meant; the last hour of life was come, and the dead, heavy sinking of the heart which the aspect of death suddenly presented to an unprepared and excited mind, was the first sensation. There the door stood, at a little distance on his right hand, and they were at the other end of the hut, with no one between him and the means of egress; but he knew their swiftness of foot and deadly aim too well. It was better to stay and meet the worst there, than to fall by the tomahawk in inglorious flight. He rallied his spirits, he called all his courage to his aid, he bethought him of how an Indian would die, and resolved to die boldly, and calmly, likewise.

Sitting still in silence, he gazed over the countenances of the chiefs, scanning their stern, hard features thoughtfully. There were but two there whom he knew, Black Eagle himself, and an old man with a white scalp-lock, whom he recollected having comforted and supported once, when he found him ill and exhausted near his father's

house. The others were all strangers to him, and nothing could be read upon their faces but cold, rigid determination. There was no passion, no anger, no emotion to be traced in a single line; but there was something inexpressibly dreadful in gazing on those still, quiet countenances, with a knowledge of their bloody purpose. To have died in battle would have been nothing—to have struggled with them fiercely for life; but to sit there, coldly awaiting the moment of the ruthless blow, and to know that they expected it to be borne with the same quiet, stoical apathy with which it was dealt, was very, very terrible to the young European. Yet Walter tried to nerve himself to the utmost against any sign of fear, and strove for resolution not to disgrace himself, his name and family, even in the eyes of these wild Indians. There must have been apprehension in his eyes—in the straining eagerness with which he scanned them, but there was no other mark of alarm; not a muscle moved; the lip did not quiver; the brow was not contracted.

At length, after that long, solemn pause, the voice of Black Eagle was heard, speaking low and softly: "My son, thou must die," he said. "Thou art dear to me as a child; thy father is my brother; but thou hast drawn an evil lot, and thou must die. The morning of thy days has been short and bright; the night comes for thee before the day is well begun. The blood of our brother who was slain must be atoned by the blood of one of the race that slew him—the white man for the redman. We have sought in vain for the murderer of our brother, or for someone who might have been a substitute for him whom we love. Each man here would have periled his own head to find another in thy place; but it could not be. The palefaces took fright at the news of what has been done, and none has been found within our territory. We know that the man who did the deed has been here. We fancied that he had come generously to pay the penalty of his own deed; but fear was in his heart, and twice he escaped us. He

is as cunning as the fox, and as swift to flee. Now, oh! thou son of my brother, thou must die, for the time is gone by that was given thee in the hope of some deliverance. The hours have run swiftly and in vain, and the last has come. We know that it is the custom of thy people to sing no war song at their death, but to pray to their Good Spirit to receive them speedily into the happy hunting grounds. We shall not think it want of courage if thou prayest, for the son of our brother Prevost will not disgrace his name at his death. Pray, therefore, to thy God; thy prayer shall be, as it were, a war song, and, strengthened by it, thou shalt die as a man and a warrior."

Walter remained silent for a moment, while a terrible struggle went on in his breast; but resolution conquered, and he rose from the ground, on which he was sitting, erect and firm, and stretching forth his hand, he said: "Chiefs of the Oneidas, ye are unjust. At this hour of my death I tell you, ye know not equity. Your laws are not of the Good Spirit, but of the bad; for it is evil to kill an innocent man, black and dastardly to slay a helpless man, who trusted you and loved you; and if it is by your law you do it, your law is bad, and the Good Spirit will condemn it. My father came and planted his tree amongst you. We grew up, my sister and myself, loving and confiding in your people. We made your tongue our tongue, and my heart became one with the heart of the daughter of your chief. Lo! now, how ye repay kindness, and love, and truth!—with falsehood, cruelty, and death! Ye are great warriors, but ye are not good men. In this last hour I reproach you, and I tell you with the voice of a dying man, as with the voice of one from the land of spirits, that, sooner or later, the great God of all men will make you feel that you have done an evil thing in my death——"

He paused suddenly, for his eye—turned somewhat in the direction of the door—saw a female figure enter, wrapped in the peculiar blanket or mantle of the Indian women. Another and another appeared, and one by one

the shadowy forms ranged themselves in line along the side of the hut, their faces but faintly seen by the flickering firelight. They were all as silent as death, and there they stood, as silent witnesses of the dreadful scene about to be enacted.

The eyes of all the chiefs were turned in the same direction as his own, and a moment or two of wonder and embarrassment passed; but then the voice of Black Eagle was raised, loudly and sternly, saying: "Get ye home to the Castle, Oneida women! This is no place for you. Meddle not with the business of warriors and of men!"

"Who is it that speaks?" said the clear, shrill voice of the Gray Dove. "Is it the man of the black heart, who slays the son of his brother? Who is it that dares to speak thus to her who sees the Great Spirit in her visions, and holds communion with the souls of the dead? Is it a man pure in heart and hand, a man whose purposes are good in the sight of the Great Spirit, who is doing a deed pleasing in his sight? Is he taking the life of an enemy in the battle? Is he scalping a foe with whom he has fought and conquered? Lo! now, this is a brave deed, to slay the son of a friend, and a boy who has no power to resist. But the boy shall not die. If a paleface has killed one of the children of the Stone, this boy has saved the life of more than one. His hand has been free, and his heart open to the Oneida, and his good deeds are more than enough to atone for the evil deeds of another. The ashes of thy pipe, Black Eagle, upon the hearth of Prevost, call out shame upon the murder of his son!"

"Get ye hence, women!" said another chief. "We are not soft as water, to be turned in what course ye will; we are the children of the Stone, and our heart is the rock."

"Be it so, then!" cried Black Eagle's sister. "Look upon us now, oh chiefs! We are here, your mothers, your sisters, your daughters, your wives; those ye love best, those who best love you. See, now, what we are commanded to do by the voice of the Good Spirit. If ye slay the youth, ye

slay us. Every lodge shall be left desolate; there shall be wailing through the village and through the land. Now, my sisters, if their heart be a stone, let our heart be soft, and let the knife find it easily!"

As she spoke, every mantle was thrown back, and every arm was raised, and in every hand was seen the gleam of a knife.

Black Eagle covered his eyes with his mantle, but sat still. Walter sprang across and cast himself at the feet of Otaitisa, exclaiming: "Hold! hold! For God's sake, hold, my Blossom!"

"Back! back!" cried the girl, vehemently. "If thou diest, I die!"

"All! all!" said the women, in the same determined tone.

At the same moment the old priest rose and stretched forth his hands. "It is the voice of the Great Spirit!" he exclaimed, in the tone of one inspired. "He speaks to us by their tongue; he tells us to forbear! The deed is evil in his sight; we must not do it! The blood of our brother is atoned—it is the voice of the Great Spirit!"

"It is the voice of the Great Spirit—it is the voice of the Great Spirit!" exclaimed each of the chiefs, and Black Eagle, casting from him the tomahawk, took Walter in his arms, saying, in a low voice, "My son! my son!"

Otaitisa took a step forward toward them, but before she reached her father her sight grew dim and she fell at his feet.*

* All the principal incidents in the above remarkable scene were related to me by Judge Spencer as having occurred within his own personal knowledge.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THERE was the bustle and the din of preparation in the great Castle of the Oneidas. With the first light of the morning, numerous small bands began to pour in, summoned secretly long before, to hold a war council, and to march against the enemy. Before noon larger bands began to appear, led by several of the noted warriors of the nation, and one very numerous body coming across the lake in a little fleet of canoes brought with them a great quantity of baggage in the shape of huts and provisions, with women and even children.

The scene which took place when all were assembled, in number more than a thousand, is perfectly indescribable. Nor shall I attempt to give a picture of it. A long period of peace seemed only to have given the western warriors a sort of thirst for war; and their joy at the unburying of the hatchet and the march against the enemy broke forth in demonstrations which to any civilized eye would have appeared perfectly frantic. Screaming, shouting, singing, dancing, striking the war post with their tomahawks, and shaking their rifles in the air, they seemed like beings possessed by some evil spirit—the calm and grave demeanor was altogether cast aside, and the calmest and most moderate boasted outrageously of deeds done in the past or to be performed in the coming war. About an hour after noon, however, a sudden and complete change came over the scene. In an open space before the great lodge, all the chieftains of the different totems or tribes assembled, and the usual circle was formed around the great war post of the Black Eagle. The younger warriors gathered in other

rows without the first, and the youths, the women, and the children were seen beyond these again. One exception to the usual order took place. The great chief had on either side of him one of those, both of whom he now called his children. Otaita, in her most brilliant costume, stood upon his left, and Walter Prevost, armed and dressed like the Oneidas, with the sole difference that his head was not shaved, like theirs, remained standing throughout the ceremony, on his right.

As soon as all was quiet—and the stillness of death very soon fell over the whole multitude—Black Eagle, in a speech of powerful eloquence, related all that had occurred on the preceding night, and justified the act of himself and the other chiefs in the eyes of the people. He said that he himself and five of his brethren had been prepared to sacrifice the son of Prevost to atone for the blood of the Snake, and to satisfy the customs of the Oneidas, although they would rather have slain their own son; but that the Great Spirit had spoken by the tongue of his sister, and they had forborne. When he had done, the Old Cedar Tree rose, but uttered only a few words. "It was the voice of the Great Spirit," he said; and immediately a murmur of "Koui! koui!" ran round the assembly, in confirmation of the act.

The chief then explained to his warriors why he had that day called them around him; for although the object was already well known to all, and the news had by that time spread that the Englishmen were marching against the French upon Lake Champlain, the Indians never acted in masses without solemn deliberation; and a war speech, as they called it, was universally expected from their renowned leader. He dealt at length upon the alliance between the English and the Five Nations, upon the good faith with which the stipulations of their treaties had been maintained by the British Provinces; he referred to the talk held some six months before, at the Castle of Sir William Johnson, skilfully mingling with his discourse the names

of several persons most popular with the tribes, and he ended by exhorting his hearers to show their truth and friendship toward their English brethren, and to pour down their fiercest wrath upon the French, whom he spoke of contemptuously as brethren of the Hurons and the Algonquins.

The same signs of approbation followed; and many another chief added his voice, raising the passions of the warriors to the highest pitch. One, especially, urged them to immediate action, telling them that the Mohawks had already marched, that they were with the English army, and that the faces of the children of the Stone would be full of shame if a Mohawk brought home more scalps than an Oneida.

Some were for setting out on the instant, but this proposal was overruled, and the following morning was appointed for the march to begin, as more parties were expected from the different districts, and some had not come fully prepared for the long journey and important enterprise.

The council was succeeded by scenes similar to those with which the day began, and it must not be concealed that in many instances the dreadful firewater was employed, so far as even to produce beastly intoxication. Small drums and wild instruments of music, songs of every different character, from the wailing lament or the religious chant to the fierce and boastful war song, rose from every part of the village; and it was not till the sun had completely set that anything like quiet and order was restored. Paint it in what colors we will, it was a barbarous and terrible, though exciting scene, and Walter Prevost was well pleased to hear the noise gradually die away into low murmurs, and silence again begin to resume her reign.

Then came a very, very happy hour. He sat with Otaitsa alone, in the great lodge, while the Black Eagle wandered amongst his people without; and for the first time since his deliverance from death the two had an opportunity

of pouring forth to each other the many feelings which had accumulated in the last four and twenty hours.

"At this time last night," said the youth, "I was preparing to die."

"And at this time last night," answered the girl, gazing fondly upon his face as he sat with his arm clasped fondly round her, and her head leaning on his shoulder, "and at this time last night Otaita was ready to die with you. I have since thought it very wrong of me, Walter; and fearing what I did was sinful, I have prayed part of the night to God for forgiveness, and another part I have spent in praise and thanksgiving. But I believe I was mad, my beloved, for I hardly knew what I did, and followed blindly what they told me to do to rescue him for whom I would have sacrificed a thousand lives. Besides, I was surrounded by my countrywomen, and you know they do not think as we have been taught to think."

"If it was an error it was a blessed one, my own Blossom," answered Walter, "for to it I owe my life; and life, when it is brightened by Otaita's love, is but too precious to me. The time will come, dear one, when we shall look back upon these days as but a painful dream, and the only bright reality that will last will be the memory of my Blossom's love, and all that she has done to save and bless me."

She gazed at him believingly; for hers was not a heart to doubt, and his was not a heart to be doubted; and then she said, with a sigh: "But you are now going to battle, to risk your life and all your happiness. Still it is strange, but I would not stay you, though all I have heard from good Mr. Gore should make me look upon such things with horror, and though I would fain have you keep away from danger. I suppose it is the habits of my people still clinging about me, even with a better faith than theirs."

"Fear not, dearest, fear not," answered Walter, boldly. "No harm will happen to me, I do trust and believe, and I only leave you for a few short weeks."

"You will not leave me at all, Walter," she answered,

"no, never more. I will go with you, if not to the battle, as near it as I can be. I have my father's leave; the warriors of my race will defend me, and I will not part with my recovered treasure any more."

"Go to my father's house," said Walter, joyfully. "It is very near the spot, and Edith will rejoice to have you with her."

Otaitsa fixed her eyes upon vacancy, and fell into a deep reverie; and an expression came into her face which Walter had remarked more than once before.

"Do you know, my beloved," he said, "that sometimes you strike me as very like our dear Edith, especially when you look thoughtful, as you did just now?"

"It is very natural," said Otaitsa, nestling closer to him; "you do not know that she is my cousin. My mother was your father's sister. Hush! not a word, especially in the ears of any of the tribe. My father knows it, but he will not know it, because amongst the elder people of the nation it was held contrary to our customs that cousin should marry cousin. I asked Mr. Gore long ago if it were against your law; but he said no, that it was neither against law nor religion. He inquired why I asked so earnestly," she added, laughing, "but I would not tell him. Come with me into my chamber, and I will show you many things belonging to my mother. Stay! I will light my lamp!"

Otaitsa bent down and lighted her lamp, and guided her lover up to her little chamber; and there they sat, and turned over many a long-stored treasure, and she showed him the picture of his own father, and of her mother, and of their mutual kin, and drawings of fair scenes in Europe, some of which he remembered well, with others of the land in which they then were, but of spots which he had never seen. There was one, too, left unfinished, of a young, sweet child; and Walter gazed first upon the infant face and then upon the bright, happy countenance beside him, and clasped his Blossom warmly to his breast. The

book, too, with the drop of blood upon it, told its own tale to both their hearts.

"And where is Mr. Gore?" he asked, at length; he seems seems to have left altogether his little flock, or I am sure I should have seen him during my captivity."

"He is coming back now," said Otaita. "My father would not let him return before. He was afraid, I believe, that the breath of the good man would melt his icy purpose. He had a power over Black Eagle that none other had. I prayed and besought in vain. But had Mr. Gore been here he would have conquered. Black Eagle knew it and feared, and therefore he sent him hence, and would not let him return till the day was past."

"Would that he were here now," said Walter, earnestly.

Otaita asked him why, and he answered, with a warm kiss: "That he might unite us forever."

A flush came upon her cheek, but there was the low sound of a step below, and looking down the stairs, she said: "Is that you, my father?"

"I come," said the chief; and slowly mounting the stairs, he entered the chamber where they were. His eyes roved round the room in a manner which evidently showed that it was strange to him; and then he fixed them on the pictures which lay upon the table, lighted but faintly by the lamp. At first he seemed not to distinguish what they were, but the moment he saw them clearly, he drew his mantle over his face and turned toward the door. He uttered no word, he shed no tear, but he descended slowly, and Walter and Otaita followed.

CHAPTER XXIX

ON that part of Lake Champlain, or Corlear, as it was called by the Indians, where, quitting the narrow basin which it occupies from its southern extremity to some distance northward of Ticonderoga, it opens out into a broader sheet of water, and sweeps round the small peninsula of Crown Point, a large canoe was seen crossing to the Canada side, with some sixteen or seventeen persons on board, amongst whom were Edith Prevost and her companion, Woodchuck. There was no attempt at concealment, no creeping along under shelter of the banks, but boldly and openly the Indians paddled on, within range of the guns of the French fort, and then directly across the bows of two large, flat-bottomed boats or batteaux, accompanied by several light canoes, each of the latter containing six or seven men, which were going down the lake in the direction of Ticonderoga.

From each of the larger boats the flag of France was conspicuously displayed; but as the strange canoe above mentioned seemed bearing straight for the shore, fully in possession of France, its movements, for a time, appeared to excite no attention. Neither the batteaux nor the other canoes altered their course, the men in the former continuing a shouted conversation in a mixed jargon, part French, part Indian, with their dusky companions in the lesser craft, who kept as nearly alongside as possible.

At length, however, it would seem some suspicion was excited. Two figures, male and female, were discerned from the batteaux in the stern of the strange canoe, whose dress at once showed them to belong to none of the Indian

tribes, and was also somewhat different from that of either the Canadian colonists or the native French. The two parties were now within less than a hundred yards of each other, and it seemed doubtful whether the large canoe would clear the eastern French boat without trouble. But suddenly a voice was raised loud in the foremost batteau and a question was put in French as to whither the others were bound, and who they were.

The Indians were silent, for they did not understand the words addressed to them; but Woodchuck whispered eagerly: "Answer! answer! if you can speak their jargon. Rather be in the hands of French officers than these incarnate devils!"

Edith's eyes had been cast down, and so full of bitter tears that she had seen nothing since they left the western shore. But now she looked up, and in an instant her presence of mind returned. It is true she did not speak at once, for she feared her voice would not reach the boat; but it was nearing the canoe fast, and in a moment after the question was repeated in a more peremptory and a more distinct tone.

"Tell them we are allies of the great French chief," said Apukwa, who seemed to comprehend in some degree the meaning of the call. "Say we are going to join our Canadian father;" and he glared fiercely as he spoke.

"We are English!" exclaimed Edith, in French, exerting her utmost power of voice. "We are English and Iroquois, going I know not whither!"

Instantly, at a signal from the batteaux, the light canoes dashed out with extraordinary rapidity, and before any effectual effort could be made to escape, the larger canoe was surrounded, while the yells of the Hurons announced that they recognized at length a band of ancient enemies. With a fiend-like look at Edith, Apukwa drew his tomahawk from his belt; but the brother of the Snake spoke some words to him in a low tone, the weapon was replaced, the men ceased to work the paddles, and every face as-

sumed the quiet stillness of perfect indifference. The yells and whoops of the Hurons still continued, so that one danger seemed only to be escaped to encounter a still greater. Their fierce faces and dark, half-naked forms, tattooed and painted, were seen all round, and the tomahawk and the knife were brandished, as if for immediate action. But one of the large boats bore right down amongst them, and soon grappled the canoe in which Edith and her companion were. A handsomely dressed, middle-aged man stood up in the stern, as it came near, and turning to an Indian who seemed a chief, by his side, said to him in French: "Keep your people quiet, Great Elk!"

A few words were then spoken, or rather shouted, by the Indian to the others in the canoes, in a language which Edith did not at all understand, and in an instant every Huron sank down in silence, and the light skiffs lay quiet upon the water, or only moved slightly with the momentum they had already received from the paddles. Then raising his hat and plume, with an air of much grace, the French officer addressed Edith, saying: "Will you have the goodness to explain to me, mademoiselle, who and what you are, and how you came to be in the position in which I find you? I am sorry to be obliged to detain a lady, but you have too many men with you to suffer your canoe to pass."

"I am the daughter of an English gentleman," replied Edith. "I have been attacked and captured with the friend who was escorting me from my father's house to that of Colonel Schneider; my two servants were murdered—at least one of them, I am sure, was. The Indians who are with me are Iroquois, who are taking me forcibly across the lake, toward Canada, and I have little doubt that I shall be put to death also, if you do not save me from their hands."

"But this is a strange story, mademoiselle," said the officer. "The Iroquois and your countrymen are in alliance."

"I cannot account for it," said Edith. "They are cer-

tainly Iroquois, for they speak no other language, except a few words of English. You must ask them what is the meaning of their conduct, if you have any on board who can speak their tongue."

The officer turned once more to his Indian companion and addressed some words to him in French; but the chief shook his head, and then drawing his eyelids together, as if to see more distinctly, gazed into the canoe, scanning the persons of the Indians closely. "They are Iroquois," he said, at length. "Let us scalp them."

This proposal the officer did not think fit to comply with, at least for the time, and he replied, with a laugh: "Wait a little, my friend. The Great Elk shall have scalping enough soon. We will take them ashore with us, at all events, and perhaps may learn more. Then, if they are really enemies, you may exercise your skill upon them to your heart's content. The lady and her English companion, however, I claim as my prisoners. Permit me, mademoiselle, to assist you into the boat. You will be safer here, and may trust to the honor and courtesy of a French gentleman."

"I have no fears on that score, sir," answered Edith, rising; and, with the aid of the officer and Woodchuck, passing into the other boat, which, flat-bottomed and heavily laden, was not much higher above the water than the canoe. Woodchuck followed her closely, but not without exciting the wrath of the Honontkoh. They had sat ever since the canoe had been grappled by the boat with the most tranquil stillness. Not a limb, not a feature had moved; and to the eye of an observer ignorant of their habits, they would have seemed perfectly indifferent to all that was taking place. In fact, one of them appeared actually going to sleep; for the sun, which had now broken out after the storm, shone full on his face, and his eyes were closed, and his head bent. But the moment that Woodchuck put his foot over the side of the batteau a yell of disappointed rage burst from every lip; and, unable

to contain himself, Apukwa arose and poured forth a few words of Huron, mixed with a good deal of Iroquois.

"Hold your tongues!" exclaimed the French officer, waving his hand imperiously. "Tow them along behind us; and you, Great Elk, command your people to keep close round them and see they do not cut the rope and slip away."

The orders were given as he directed, and the arrangements made; but when all was completed, and the boat was once more moving along the lake, the Indian by his side pulled the officer's sleeve, thus interrupting a speech he had just begun, with a gallant air, to Edith, and seemed to explain something to him in a low tone.

"Well, we shall soon find out," said the Frenchman, with a gay laugh. "If they are Iroquois who are going to become Hurons, and take service under his majesty, we will make them fight for us where we are going. We shall not have too many hands to help us, Great Elk, and they'll make a good reinforcement to your party. As for the lady and her attendant, I will take care of them;" and turning to Edith, with a courteous smile, he spread his roquelaure in a more convenient part of the boat, and assisted her to seat herself more comfortably, saying: "Mademoiselle is a great deal too charming to travel any more with such savages. But may I know the name of this gentleman? Can he not speak French?"

"Not a word, I believe," replied Edith.

"That is singular," exclaimed the Frenchman, giving expression to the general feeling of his nation, who seem to believe that the French language is one of those blessings of God which it is strange He should deny to any of his creatures. "What is his name?"

It instantly passed through the mind of Edith that if she gave her good companion the name of Captain Brooks she would be certain to cause his detention as a prisoner of war, and she therefore simply replied: "He is called Woodchuck."

"Woodchuck!" exclaimed the Frenchman; "quel drol de nom! Is Monsieur Woodchuck in the army?"

To the question, thus put, Edith could fairly answer in the negative, for Brooks, though he had seen no little fighting in his day, was merely one of those amateur soldiers, then very common in the provinces, who rarely missed an opportunity of joining some band of volunteers in times of war with France, or fighting upon their own hand, according to the Dutchman's expression, as one of the extensive class called stragglers. They generally bore away from the field, especially if they distinguished themselves, some military title, such as captain or major, without ever having commanded half a dozen men in their lives.

After having asked his questions, and settled his conduct, the French officer's next business was, of course, politeness, and he would fain have engaged his lovely companion in gay and lively conversation during the rest of their little voyage; but Edith, though her mind was greatly relieved to find herself freed from the power of the Honontkoh, had many a subject of melancholy contemplation to occupy her thoughts. There was the dark and dreary consideration of her brother's fate; there was the uncertainty of what might befall her father and her lover; there was the separation from all most dear to her; there was the doubt, even now, whether she might not herself be detained a prisoner amongst strangers; for the war in America had hitherto been conducted by the French upon principles the most barbarous and most opposed to the ordinary characteristics of the nation. The scene which succeeded the capture of Fort William Henry was a dark and damning fact, never to be obliterated from the minds of men; and although it has been put forth by an American author as the only stain upon the character of Montcalm, that author must surely have forgotten the violated capitulation of Oswego, the death of the gallant De la Court, and the scalping and massacre of the sick in the hospital. All that we can trust is that these barbarities were only permitted, not encour-

aged. But how can we account for or excuse, how can we even palliate, the witting and voluntary delivery of twenty of the garrison into the hands of the Indians, in direct violation of the articles of capitulation, to be tortured to death under the very eyes of the French soldiery, as compensation for the loss of twenty of the French Indians? It is a fact which has never been denied, or it would be too horrible for belief.

Edith replied briefly, therefore, to the compliments and pretty speeches of her military companion, and in the meanwhile the boat proceeded rapidly over the surface of the lake, passed Crown Point, and entered the narrow portion of Lake Champlain, which stretches from that promontory to the spot where the Sounding Waters, as the Indians called the outlet of Lake George, flow into the greater lake, near Ticonderoga.

The French officer, somewhat baffled in his attempts to make her speak, tried his fortune with Woodchuck, but with still less success; for to everything he said in French he received what can hardly be called an answer in English; and generally, it must be said, not a very civil one; for Brooks was filled with all the most unreasonable prejudices of his country, and never uttered the word "Frenchman" without coupling it with the epithet "rascally." The voyage was brought to a close, however, before night fell, for the boat stopped short by a mile or two of Ticonderoga, and considerably to the north of the spot where the ferry now exists.

The scene would have appeared beautiful, had Edith's mind been free to enjoy it, for in front were seen the tops of the several bold eminences round the French fort. On the one side were those rich lands, varied at that time with scattered masses of forest, though now more highly cultivated, known as the New Hampshire grants, and to the westward a varied country, rising gradually to the foot of the Mohegan Mountains. The spot chosen for the landing was a secluded cove in the woods, where the shelving rocks

broke through the soil and dipped gradually into the water. Boats and canoes were all speedily hauled up. The commander of the party, with delicate attention, handed Edith out, and then gave orders to his men to follow him, which was effected with rapidity and precision. The savages, under the orders of their chief, took care of the Iroquois prisoners, and apparently by no slight act of forbearance resisted the great temptation to possess themselves of their scalps. When all had disembarked the canoes were drawn safely up under concealment of the bushes on either side, and the voyageurs in the two larger boats pushed off and took their way up the lake again.

"I fear, mademoiselle," said the captain of the French soldiers, who might have amounted to sixty or seventy, "I must trouble you to take a somewhat fatiguing promenade of some four or five miles; at least so I am told, for I have never been here myself, and do not know the distance."

"Then are we not going to Fort Ticonderoga?" asked Edith.

"Not so," replied the officer. "We are going a little beyond, and I shall have no opportunity of detaching any party whom I could trust to send you into the fort to-night. The Indians, indeed, could be spared—at least a sufficient number to escort you—but I should really be apprehensive from what I know of their habits, that you might not be quite so safe in their charge as under the protection of my musketeers, with your devoted servant at their head. We will endeavor to make you as comfortable as we can for the night, and I doubt not that early to-morrow I shall be visited by some superior officer, who will have the honor of conveying you to the fort."

"Then am I to consider myself as a prisoner?" asked Edith, in a cold tone. "I did not know that it was the habit of French officers to make women captives."

"No!" replied the Frenchman, with a graceful bow; "we ourselves are much more frequently their captives. But,

my dear lady, within the limits of this garrison I myself have no command—am merely acting under orders, and feel myself imperatively bound to send you and your companion, Monsieur Woodchuck, to the commandant of the fortress, who will act, I am sure, as he finds befitting. I only regret that I cannot do so at once; but my orders are strict, my route marked out, and I am told to hasten across this small peninsula as fast as possible without approaching the fortress. It is certainly a rather long walk, but if you feel fatigued I can easily make my men construct a little litter, and carry you. We shall find some preparation made for us where we are going, though, I am afraid, not very suitable for your use.”

Edith evidently saw that remonstrance was in vain; and saying that she should prefer to walk, she took the arm of Woodchuck, and explained to him as they went all that had passed between her and the Frenchman.

“I guess he is going to form an ambuscade,” said Woodchuck. “If so, Miss Prevost, our army must be near, and we sha’n’t be long in their hands. I wish to heaven I could get away from them, and had but a horse to carry me,” he added, thoughtfully, and with a sigh. “But it’s no use wishing. God knows his own ways best! Them Hurons look very much as if they would eat the Oneidas before they’ve done. Pray God they mayn’t take such a fancy to us, too!”

Thus saying, he took the place which was assigned to him and Edith in the march. A number of Indians preceded, several little parties moved upon the flanks, the small body of French infantry moved on two abreast, for the trail was barely wide enough for that number. Woodchuck and Edith followed them, and the French officer, with the Indian whom he called Great Elk, walked next, succeeded by the Iroquois prisoners, a large quantity of baggage, borne on men’s shoulders, and the remainder of the Huron auxiliaries.

It was now twilight in the forest, and for more than an

hour after darkness had fallen upon the earth the weary and somewhat perilous march was continued. Once a small stream was crossed, Woodchuck taking up his fair companion in his sturdy arms and bearing her over like an infant. Nothing of any note occurred, except a slow and low-toned conversation in the rear, which led Edith to believe that the Iroquois, her late captors, had found some of the other band of natives with whom they could converse; but she could not distinguish anything that was said.

Weary and exhausted, the sight of a fire at length glimmering through the trees was an exceedingly pleasant sight to her eyes, and a minute or two after a scene presented itself which might have seemed dreary and comfortless enough under other circumstances, but which looked cheerful and comfortable after that long and miserable march.

The trail which they had followed terminated in a small open space, flanked on three sides by low earthworks of no very regular construction, but evidently designed by an experienced military hand. The outer surface of these works was partially concealed by a thicket, and great care had been taken not only to preserve the brambles and the large-leaved raspberry, but to fill every gap in this shrubbery screen with branches of pine, and hemlock, and maple. Within these embankments the ground had, to a certain extent, been cleared, though two or three of the larger trees had been left standing, to prevent a vacancy being apparent from without. About the middle of the open space a number of rude huts had been erected, of small felled trees and branches; and before one, somewhat larger than the rest, a sentinel was seen planted, who, at the moment Edith came in sight, stood motionless, presenting arms, as his comrades filed into the little quadrangle. Behind the soldier, and between him and the huts, was a large blazing fire, which threw out his dark figure, sharply outlined upon the flame.

"Ah! this will do," said the French commander, in a tone of relief. "The commandant has been careful of us.

Mademoiselle, I welcome you to my redoubt, and will do my best to make the evening pass pleasantly for you. Now bring in the baggage. Tell the cook to get supper ready; and you, Pierrot, see that hut properly arranged for this young lady's accommodation. I calculated on sleeping upon a very comfortable bearskin to-night, but I will most willingly resign it to you, mademoiselle, in the hope of your passing a good night's rest."

Edith would fain have declined accepting a sacrifice so enhanced, but the captain insisted; and his servant, whom he called Pierrot, at once set about the preparations for her comfort with a degree of skill and dexterity truly French. In the meantime, while Edith, sitting on the trunk of a fallen tree, waited till all was ready, and while a group of stragglers unpacked the baggage which had just been deposited from the sturdy shoulders of the bearers, the French officer called his friend, the Huron chief, to council; and Apukwa and the other Oneidas were brought before him, accompanied by two young Hurons, who undertook to act as interpreters. Many were the questions asked, and what between the captain's ignorance of Indian manners, and the interpreters' ignorance both of the French and Iroquois, the worthy officer seemed completely puzzled.

At length, however, after consulting the Great Elk in a low voice, he exclaimed: "Tell them, if their tale be really true—though I've got my doubts, for I never heard of Free Masons amongst Indians before, and that must be what you mean by Honontkoh—but if their tale be really true, they may stay here with us, and prove their devotion to His Majesty Louis the Fifteenth, King of France, by fighting the English at our side. They shall be sharply watched, however," he added, in a low voice, as if speaking to himself.

Apukwa heard his words translated, and then, saying something in reply, pointed to Edith and her English com-

panion with a look of too much meaning to be misunderstood.

"Nothing of the kind," answered the French officer, without waiting for the words which seemed about to follow. "Tell him there's but one choice, either to prove their story and their loyalty by fighting on our side, or to pass under the fire of these gentlemen," and he laid his hand upon a pile of muskets which stood close beside him.

This intimation was quite sufficient. The Honontkoh agreed to stay and fight without any further conditions, and the Frenchman then gave strict orders, both to his own soldiers and the Hurons—by whom they were much more likely to be efficiently obeyed—that their very doubtful allies should be kept continually in sight. He then seemed to cast all thought of the affair behind him, and turned toward Edith, who was already in the hut, saying: "I hope, mademoiselle, Pierrot has taken good care of you."

"With all the skill and courtesy of a Frenchman, monsieur," she answered, really pleased with the attention and almost fatherly kindness of the soldier who had been arranging the hut.

"Then, now, as you have the means of rest, it only remains to provide you with meat and drink," said the officer. "I see they have spread my tablecloth on the grass there. Will you and your friend come and partake of my fare? Pray make my words understood to him."

Woodchuck readily agreed to accept the Frenchman's hospitality, but Edith declined taking anything more than a little bread and some wine, alleging that she needed rest more than anything. The French officer, however, would not be content with this, but with his own hands brought her some savory messes which would not have disgraced a Parisian dinner table, some choice wine, and, what was still more valuable to her, a small lamp. He then closed the hurdle door of the hut upon her and returned to his meal with Woodchuck, keeping up with him for half an hour a sort of conversation by words and signs, one-half of

which was probably unintelligible to both. The Frenchman then took possession of another hut, and invited Woodchuck to share it with him for the night; but the stout woodsman declined any covering but the sky, and stretching himself across Edith's door, was soon in profound slumber.

CHAPTER XXX

WE must go back for a very short time to the spot whence Edith and her Oneida captors set out upon what proved to the latter an unfortunate voyage across Lake Champlain, and to the very moment after their canoe had left the shore. The Long House, as the Five Nations were pleased to call their territory, extended from the great lakes and a point far west, to the banks of the Hudson and Lakes Huron and Champlain; but, as is always the case in border countries, the frontier was often crossed, both by wandering or predatory bands of Hurons and other nations under the sway of France, and by outlaws from the Iroquois tribes attached to England. The peculiar habits and laws of the Indian tribes rendered the incorporation of fugitives with other nations a very easy matter, although the language of the Five Nations would seem to be radically different from that of the tribes originally inhabiting the seaboard of America. Indeed, on the western shore of Lake Champlain not a few pure Hurons were to be found; for that tribe, during the successful campaigns of France against England, with which what is called the French and Indian war commenced, had somewhat encroached upon the Iroquois territory, supported in their daring by the redoubted name of Montcalm.

With some of these, it would seem, Apukwa and his companions had entered into a sort of tacit alliance, and toward their dwellings they had directed their steps after their attack upon Edith and her little escort, in the expectation of readily finding a canoe to waft them over the lake. At first they had been disappointed, for the barks which

had been there the day before were gone; and when they did find the canoe in which they ultimately commenced their voyage, the avaricious old man to whom it belonged would not let them use it without a world of bargaining; and it cost them a considerable portion of the little stock of ornaments and trinkets which they had found in Edith's plundered baggage, before the Huron consented to lend them that which they did not dare take by force.

Thus more than an hour was passed, after they reached the lake shore, before they departed; and their taking their course so boldly across the bows of the French boats was more a matter of necessity than choice, although they little doubted a good reception from the inveterate enemies of England. No sooner, however, had the canoe shot out into the water than the figure of a tall, dark woman emerged from the bushes of the low point under which the skiff had lain, and she began wringing her hands with every appearance of grief and anxiety.

"O, what will poor massa do!" she cried, in a piteous voice. "What will poor massa do! Him son killed, him daughter stolen, and Chaudo tomahawked! Ah, me! ah, me! What will we all do?"

Her imprudent burst of grief had nearly proved destructive to poor Sister Bab. The old Huron had turned him quietly toward a small birch bark cabin in the forest hard by, and would never have remarked the poor negress if she had confined the expression of her cares to mere gesture; but her moans and exclamations caught the quick ear of the savage, and he turned and saw her plainly, gazing after the canoe. With no other provocation than a taste for blood, he stole quietly through the trees, with the soft, gliding, noiseless motion peculiar to his race, and making a circuit so as to conceal his advance, he came behind the poor creature just as she beheld the canoe which bore away her young mistress stopped and surrounded by the little flotilla of the French. Another moment would have been fatal to her, for the Indian was within three yards, when

a large rattlesnake suddenly raised itself in his path and made him recoil a step. Whether attracted by the small, but never-to-be-forgotten sound of the reptile's warning, or some noise made by the Huron in suddenly drawing back, the poor negress turned her head and saw her danger.

With a wild scream she darted away toward the lake. The savage sprang after her with a yell, and though old he retained much of the Indian lightness of foot. Onward toward the shore he drove her, meditating each moment to throw his hatchet if she turned to the right or left. But Sister Bab was possessed of qualities which would not have disgraced any of his own tribe, and even while running at her utmost speed she contrived continually to deprive him of his aim. Not a tree, not a shrub, not a mass of stone that did not afford her a momentary shelter, and of every inequality of the ground she took advantage. Now she whirled sharply round the little shoulder of the hill; now, as the tomahawk was just balanced to be thrown with more fatal certainty, she sprang down a bank which almost made the Indian pause. Then she plunged head foremost, like a snake, through the thick brushwood, and again appeared in a different spot from that where he had expected to see her.

Still, however, he was driving her toward the lake, at a spot where the shores were open, and where he felt certain of overtaking her. On she went, however, to the very verge of the lake, gazed to the right and left, and seeing with apparent consternation that the banks rounded themselves on both sides, forming a little bay, near the center of which she stood, she paused for a single instant, as if in despair. The Huron sprang after with a wild whoop, clutching the tomahawk firmly to strike the fatal blow.

But Sister Bab was not yet in his grasp, and with a bold leap she sprang from the ledge into the water. Her whole form instantly disappeared, and for at least a minute her savage pursuer stood gazing at the lake in surprise

and disappointment, when suddenly he saw a black object appear at the distance of twenty or thirty yards, and suddenly sink again. A few moments after it rose once more, still farther out, and then the brave woman was seen striking easily away toward the south.

Rendered only more eager by the chase, and more fierce by disappointment, the Huron ran swiftly along the shore, thinking that he could easily tire her out or cut her off; but, in sunny waters in far distant lands, she had sported with the waves in infancy, and taking the chord of the bow where he was compelled to take the arc, she gained in distance what she lost in speed. So calm was she, so cool, that turning her eyes from her pursuer, she gazed over the water in the direction where she had seen her beloved young mistress carried, and had the satisfaction of beholding the canoe towed along by one of the French boats. Why she rejoiced she hardly knew, for her notions on such matters were not very definite; but anything seemed better than to remain in the hands of the murderers of poor Chaudo.

Her thoughts were still of Edith, and she asked herself: "Where are they taking her to, I wonder. Perhaps I may come up with them if that redskin would but leave off running along by the shore and let me land and cross the narrow point. He may run the devil foot. He can't catch Bab. I'll dive again. He think her drowned."

Her resolution was instantly executed; and whether it was that her stratagem was successful, or that the Huron had less than Indian perseverance and gave up the chase, when she rose again she saw him turning toward the woods, as if about to go back to his lodge. But Bab had learned caution, and she pursued her way toward the small peninsula where stood the French fort of Crown Point, which at the period I speak of had been nearly stripped of its garrison to reinforce Ticonderoga. She chose her spot, however, with great care, for though in her wanderings she had made herself well acquainted with the country, she was, of course, ignorant of the late movements of the

troops, and fancied that the French posts extended as far beyond the walls of the fortress as they had formerly done. A little woody island, hardly separated from the mainland, covered her approach, and the moment her feet touched the shore she darted away into the forest and took the trail which led nearly due south. The neck of the point was soon passed, and once more she caught sight of the French boats still towing the canoe on which her thoughts so particularly rested.

The short detention of the French party, and the advantage she gained by her direct course across the point, had put her a little in advance, and she ran rapidly on till she reached the mouth of the small river now called Putnam's Creek, which, being flooded by the torrents of rain that had fallen in the earlier part of the day, made her pause for a moment, gazing at the rushing and eddying waters coming down, and doubting whether she had strength left to swim across it. The boats, by this time, were somewhat in advance, and when she gazed after them she naturally came to the conclusion that they were bound for what she called, after the Indian fashion, Cheeonderoga. Suddenly, however, as she watched, she saw their course altered, and it soon became evident that they intended to land considerably north of the fort. Running up the creek, then, till she found a place where she could pass, she followed an Indian trail through the woods, lying a little to the west of the present line of road, and at length reached an eminence nearly opposite to Shoreham—a spur of Mount Hope, in fact—when she once more caught a view of the lake, just in time to see the disembarkation of the French troops and the Indians.

Notwithstanding her great strength, the poor negress was by this time exceedingly tired; but still that persevering love which is one of the brightest traits of her unfortunate race, carried her on. "If I can catch sight of them again," she thought, "I can carry ole massa tidings of where she is."

Encouraged by this idea, she pushed on without pause; but night overtook her before she had seen any more of the party, and poor Bab's spirit began to fail. More slowly she went, somewhat doubtful of her way, and in the solitude, the darkness, and the intricacy of the woods, fears began to creep over her which were not familiar to her bosom. At length, however, she thought she heard voices at a distance, and a minute or two after she found herself on the bank of a small brook. She paused and listened. The voices were now more audible, and without hesitation she crossed and crept cautiously along in the direction from which the sounds came.

A moment or two after, the flickering of a fire through the trees attracted her attention, and more and more carefully she crept on upon her hands and knees, through the low brush, still seeing the blaze of the firelight, when she raised her eyes, but unable to perceive the spot whence it proceeded. A small pine, cut down, next met her hand as she crept along, and then a number of loose branches tossed together; and now Sister Bab began to get an inkling of the truth. "It must be what dey call an ambush," she thought, and raising herself gently, she found that she was close to a bank of earth over which the firelight was streaming. The sounds of voices were now distinctly heard, but she could not understand one word, for it seemed to her that they were speaking in two different languages, if not more, but each of them was strange to her.

At one time she fancied she heard Edith's voice, but still the language spoken was a strange one, and although the bank of earth was not more than shoulder high, she did not venture at first to rise to her whole height in order to look over it. At length, however, came some words of English, and the voice, which she judged to be Edith's, was plainly heard, saying: "This gentleman is asking you, my good friend, if you will not go and take some supper with him where the people have spread a cloth yonder." Bab could resist no more, but raised herself sufficiently to bring

her eyes above the top of the breastwork, and gazed over into the little rude redoubt.

On the right, and at the farther part of the enclosure, were a number of Indians seated on the ground; and, besides the fire already burning, several others were being piled up amidst the various groups of natives. Somewhat on the left, and stretching well nigh across the western side of the other space, were the French soldiers, in groups of five or six, with their arms piled near them. Other straggling parties were scattered over the ground, and two sentinels, with musket on shoulder, appeared on the other side of the redoubt; but the group which attracted the poor woman's chief attention was on her right, near a spot where some small huts had been erected. It consisted of three persons, a gaily dressed French officer, a man in the garb of a soldier, but with his arms cast aside, and lastly, a short, powerful man, in a yellowish-brown hunting shirt, whom Sister Bab at once recognized as her old acquaintance the Woodchuck. That sight was quite enough, and sinking down again amongst the bushes, she crept slowly away to a little distance, and there lay down to meditate as to what was next to be done.

At one time she was tempted to enter the French redoubt and remain with her young mistress. Several considerations seemed in favor of this course; and let it be no imputation upon poor Bab that hunger and the savory odors which came wafted over the earthwork were not without their influence. But then she thought: "If I do, how will ole Massa ever know where Missy is?" and this remembrance enabled her to resist the strong temptation. "I will stay here and rest till the moon get up," thought the poor woman. "I know dey must be coming up de lake by dis time, and I can catch dem before to-morrow."

To prevent herself from sleeping too long if slumber should overtake her, she crept farther out of the thick wood and seated herself in a more open spot, with her clasped hands over her knees, but with nothing else to support her.

Various sorts of fears suggested themselves to her mind as she thus sat; but oppressive weariness was more powerful than thought, and in a few moments her head was nodding.

Often she woke up during the first hour, but then she slept more profoundly, bending forward till her forehead touched her knees. It is probable, too, that she dreamed, for in the course of the next two hours several broken sentences issued from her lips in a low murmur. At length, however, she woke with a start, and found the moon silvering the whole sky to the eastward, where some bold heights towered up, still obscuring the face of the orb of night. She sat and gazed somewhat bewildered, hardly knowing where she was. But the musical voice of the falling waters, which have gained for the outlet of Lake Horicon an ever enduring name, and the grand outline of Mount Defiance seen through the trees, soon showed her that she was on that narrow point of land lying between Front Brook and the falls.

She waited till the moon had fully risen, and then stole quietly away again, keeping a southwestern course nearly up the current of the brook, and for three hours she pursued her way with a rapid and untiring foot. She had no idea of the time, and wondered if the day would never break. But the moonlight was beautifully clear, and the calm beams, as if they had some affinity with the woodland solitude, seemed to penetrate through the branches and green leaves even more easily than can the sunshine. Her fears had now nearly passed away, for she knew that she must be far beyond the French and Huron posts, and could only expect to meet with the scouts and outposts of the English army, or with parties of friendly Indians, and she consequently went on without care or precaution. Suddenly she found herself emerging from the wood into one of those low, open savannas, of which I have already spoken, close to the spot where the embers of a fire were still glowing. The grass was soft and her tread was light,

but the sleep of the Indian is lighter still, and in an instant three or four warriors started up around her.

"I am a friend! I am a friend!" cried the negress in the Iroquois tongue. "Who be you—Mohawks?"

"Children of the Stone," replied the man nearest to her, gazing at her earnestly by the moonlight. "I have seen the Dark Cloud before, but does she not dwell in the house of our brother Prevost?"

"Yes, yes!" cried Sister Bab, eagerly. "I'm his slave girl, Bab, who came to the Oneida Castle with my own Missy. But now she is the prisoner of bad men, and I have escaped, tired and hungry, and am nearly dead!"

"Come with me," said the Indian. "I will take thee where thou shalt have rest to comfort thee and meat to support thee, till the Black Eagle come. He will not be long, for he will keep the warpath night and day till he is here, and his wings are swift."

The poor woman shuddered at the name of the terrible chief, for it was closely connected in her mind with the circumstances of her young master's fate; but wearied and exhausted, the prospect of food and repose was a blessing, and she followed the Indian in silence to the other side of the savanna.

CHAPTER XXXI

SIXTEEN thousand gallant men, led by a brave and experienced general, and supported by a fine, though not very large park of artillery, seemed certainly sufficient for the reduction of a small fortress not very well garrisoned, nor supplied with any great abundance of stores. But it seemed the fate of English officers in North America to adhere strictly to all ancient rules, when ancient rules could be of no service in face of a new and totally different mode of warfare, and to abandon those rules at times and in circumstances when only they could be available.

A large fleet of bateaux had been collected at the southern extremity of Lake George, ready to transport the troops to the destined point of attack; and a council of the most experienced officers was held on the evening of the third of July, to consider the farther proceedings of the army.

All had now assembled at what was then commonly called in the province "Fort Lyman," although the name was already formally changed to "Fort Edward."

General Abercrombie was there in person, and a number of other officers appeared at the council likewise, whose experience in Indian warfare was superior to his own. There is much reason to believe that had Abercrombie's own opinion been followed in acting against a French fort, under French command, all the operations would have been conducted in the same manner, and upon the same system which would have guided a similar enterprise in Europe, and thus much bloodshed and some disgrace would have been spared.

It was represented to the commander-in-chief, however,

that numerous bodies of Indians were acting upon the side of France; that all operations carried on according to European rules had hitherto failed in America, and more than one bloody disaster was held up as a warning to his eyes; which he unhappily suffered to bias his own better judgment. In a word, as it was known that every day fresh reinforcements were being thrown into Ticonderoga, large bodies of Indians being collected for its defence, and preparations of every kind in progress, it was determined that a sudden and rapid rush should be made upon the fort, and that no consideration should be put in competition with celerity of movement and boldness of attack. Lord H—— alone represented that, from what he had personally learned during the last six months, it was absolutely necessary to employ cannon; though, perhaps with a want of proper confidence in his own reputation, he offered to lead the advanced parties, lest the opinion he expressed should seem to anyone to savor of timidity.

At as early an hour as possible the march commenced along what was called the King's road; and in high spirits, regiment after regiment entered the forest, confident in their numbers and their prowess. The regular troops pursued the well constructed causeway, while clouds of Mohawks were scattered on the flanks, sweeping the forest ground on either side. The artillery, on the heavy and clumsy carriages of that day, the tumbrels and the baggage wagons, came lumbering in the rear, and a large troop of stragglers followed, comprising the scouts, who might have been much more advantageously employed in the front, but who, for some reason unexplained, had very little service assigned to them on the expedition. General Abercrombie and his staff, with several of the superior officers, followed slowly behind all the rest, well aware that the advance of the forces would meet with no opposition, at least upon the first day's march. To this group, from every quarter, came numerous messengers throughout the day, some bringing news of a fresh levy marching up from

the eastern States; some, from the front, seeking clearer orders when any little difficulty or impediment occurred; some from Albany, with intelligence from that city or New York; and several Indian runners from the west, bearing more important tidings from the Indian tribes, now all in movement to support their British allies.

Amongst the rest appeared the silent runner Proctor, with a letter to General Abercrombie, who, as soon as he had read it, turned to Lord H——, saying: "This is a communication from your friends the Oneidas, my lord, but written by some Englishman who signs himself 'Gore.' He states that a war party of the nation is already on the western bank of the lake, and that the main body, under Black Eagle himself, is expected in the course of the day. I suppose we may therefore consider ourselves secure upon our left flank."

"Undoubtedly," replied Lord H——, with a look of anxiety which almost induced the commander-in-chief to believe that he did entertain doubts which he did not choose to express.

"You think so, I presume," said Abercrombie, gazing at him.

"Entirely," replied Lord H——; "but I was in hopes of hearing some other intelligence of a private nature, concerning Mr. Prevost's son, whose alarming position amongst the Oneidas I mentioned to you, if you recollect."

"There is nothing more," said General Abercrombie, handing him the letter; "but there is the messenger. Probably he can give you some information."

Lord H—— immediately turned toward Proctor, who was running at a sort of trot by the side of the general's horse, and inquired if he had been at the Castle of the Oneidas. The man shook his head and trotted on.

"Then where did you last come from?" asked Lord H——; but Proctor only lifted his hand and pointed toward the northwest.

"How many miles?" demanded the young nobleman,

determined to get some speech out of him. The man lifted up his hands three times with the ten fingers spread abroad, without opening his lips.

"Did you hear, amongst those who sent you," asked Lord H——, "any tidings of young Mr. Prevost?"

The man shook his head, but then suddenly stopped in his trot, and said, as if upon recollection: "They thought he had been put to death." He paused, as if what he had said had cost him a great effort, but then added, slowly, when he saw the painful expression of the young nobleman's countenance: "They only thought. They did not know. They left before."

"Did you see or hear of a man whom you know as Woodchuck—the man you saw with me at Albany?" asked Lord H——; but the other shook his head, and nothing more could be extracted from him. The man was then sent forward to join the rear guard, but his taciturnity gave Lord H—— good assurance that Mr. Prevost, who had gone forward, would not be pained by the terrible rumor which he bore.

The long and fatiguing march to the nearest point of Lake Horicon I need not describe. Many of the scenes recorded in the life of the gallant Putnam passed near or on the very route pursued; and the feats of daring and the escapes of that fine soldier are almost as marvelous still in our eyes as in those of the savage Indians of his own time, who supposed him to bear a charmed life. Suffice it that, after encountering great difficulty and some fatigue, in dragging the cannon over a road which, in the neighborhood of the settled portion of the colony was good enough, but which became almost impassable near the lake, in consequence of the heavy rains, the whole army arrived in safety at the newly constructed and yet incomplete works of Fort George, lying a little east of the site of the ever memorable Fort William Henry. By the care and diligence of the commissary general, everything that could refresh the weary soldiers was found prepared. A fleet of

one hundred and thirty-five large boats and nine hundred bateaux were seen lying along the shore of the lake of pure and holy waters; and hardly a head was laid down to slumber in the huts that night which did not fondly fancy that Ticonderoga must inevitably fall.

As usual with him, in camp or on the march, Lord H—— dined with his soldiers, and shared their simple fare; but he passed the evening with Mr. Prevost, who had found quarters in the fort. Both were grave, but the deeper gravity was with Lord H——; for though, through the mind of the elder man continually flitted painful fancies—thoughts, images, or whatever they may be called—of the fate of Brooks, and his lips murmured twice, almost involuntarily, the words “Poor Woodchuck!” yet the certainty which he felt of the safety of his son, however great the sacrifice which purchased it, was a comfort, a great, a mighty consolation, although he almost reproached himself for the sensation of rejoicing which he could not help experiencing.

Lord H——, on the contrary, felt no such certainty. Ever since his conversation with Proctor, if conversation it can be called, a gloomy feeling of apprehension had rested on him. He did not doubt poor Woodchuck in the least; he was sure that he would hold fast to his resolution. Neither had he any fears that the execution of his purpose would be delayed or prevented by any such accident as that which had in reality occurred. But he asked himself: “Might he not come too late?” They had been told the time allowed by the Oneida chief to provide a substitute for Walter, and had taken it at the European calculation of months; but since he heard that a rumor of the young man’s death was prevalent amongst the Indians, he doubted whether there had not been a mistake. The very rumor showed that some of the natives, at least, imagined the time had expired, and implied that their calculation was different. The effect upon the mind of Edith, he knew, would be terrible, when she found that her brother

might have been saved, but that his life had been lost by such a mistake.

From Mr. Prevost he strove to hide his apprehensions as far as possible, knowing well that previous anxiety never diminishes an inevitable evil; and soon after nightfall he left him to seek thought in his own tent.

The sky was clear and cloudless; the stars shining out with a largeness and a luster such as European skies can never give. A light breeze stirred the waters of the lake and made them musical along the shore, and one of the voyageurs was singing a tranquil song of home in a clear, mellow voice, as he sat in his bark. The air was mild and gentle as a morning dream, and yet the whole had that solemn calmness which is always allied to melancholy.

He sat there long; no inclination to sleep interrupted his reveries, notwithstanding the fatigue of the day; and at length the moon rose over the high eastern hills, showing an unrivaled scene of solemn beauty.

The young nobleman rose, and after gazing round him for a few moments, drinking in, as it were, the solemn loveliness, he then walked on slowly toward the blackened remains of Fort William Henry. There was little to be seen there. Montcalm had not left his work half done; for all had been destroyed, and little beyond some irregularities in the ground, and some large detached fragments of masonry, showed where so many gallant men had fought in their country's cause, only to be slaughtered after surrender by a treacherous enemy. By report he knew the ground well, and after pausing for a minute or two amongst the ruins, he turned down the dark and fearful dell where the horrible massacre was perpetrated. Every rock around had echoed to the yell of the Indians, the groan of the dying soldiers, or the shrieks of defenceless women and children. Every tree had seen beneath its boughs some of the deeds of horror and of blood which went to make up that great crime. The bones of hundreds were lying still unburied; and when the moonlight fell on the western side

of the gorge, some portion of a woman's garment, caught upon a bush, was seen fluttering in the breeze.

The immediate path along which Lord H—— went was still in profound shadow; but suddenly, across the moonlit side a little in advance of him, he saw gliding along, with noiseless steps, a troop of eight or ten shadowy forms, looking like ghosts in the pale moonlight. So much was their color the same as the rocks around, that you might almost fancy you saw through them, and that they were but the shadows from some other objects, cast upon the broken crags as they passed. Lord H—— stood and gazed, when suddenly the band stopped; and, comprehending that he had been perceived, he challenged them in English, judging at once that they must be a troop of friendly Indians. A deep voice replied in the same language, but with a strong Indian accent: "We are friends, children of the Stone. Can you tell us where to find Prevost?"

As he spoke, the leader of the Indians had advanced nearer, down the sloping ground at the foot of the rocks, and there seemed something in his tall, powerful form, and majesty of carriage, familiar to the eyes of the young nobleman, who exclaimed: "Is that the Black Eagle?"

"It is," answered the other, whose limited knowledge of English did not suffer him to indulge in his usual figurative language. "Art thou the Falling Cataract?"

"I am he to whom you gave that name," answered Lord H——; "but what want you with Mr. Prevost? Where is his son?"

"On yonder side of Horicon," answered the Indian chief, pointing with his hand toward the western side of the lake. "The boy is safe; be thy mind at rest."

Lord H—— took the hand he proffered, and pressed it in his; but at the same time he asked: "And poor Woodchuck—what of him?"

"I know not," answered Black Eagle. "We have not beheld him."

"That is strange," answered the young nobleman. "He

set out to deliver himself up to you, to save the young man's life."

"He is brave," answered Black Eagle. "The Good Spirit kept him away."

"Then how was the boy delivered?" asked Lord H——.

"We feared your people would be inexorable."

"The Great Spirit spoke by the voices of the women," answered the chief. "She who sees beyond the earth in her visions heard the voice and told its words. It was decreed that if the boy died, our wives, our daughters, our sisters should all die with him; and we listened to the voice, and obeyed."

"Come with me quickly," said Lord H——, eagerly. "Let us carry the news to Mr. Prevost. He is here at the fort now, holding an office in our army."

"I know it," replied Black Eagle. "I have been to his lodge, and found no one but the slaves, who told me. The boy I sent on with my people, for the children of the Stone have taken the warpath for England, and a thousand warriors are on their way to the place of the sounding waters. He goes to fight amongst us as our son. But I must speak with Prevost before I go, for the wings of the Black Eagle are spread, perhaps for his last flight; and who knows but he will leave his scalp on the warpost of the Huron?"

Lord H—— led the way with a quick step, and the chief and his companions followed. At the first outpost they were, of course, challenged, and strict orders having been given to admit no troop of Indians within the limits of the fort, the young nobleman and the chief proceeded alone to the quarters of Mr. Prevost. They found him still up, and busily writing orders for the following morning. When he beheld the face of Black Eagle following his noble friend, he started up, and at first drew back; but then, with a sudden change of feeling, he seized the warrior's hand, exclaiming: "My son lives! My son lives, or you would not be here!"

"He lives," replied the Black Eagle; and he then pro-

ceeded to give the same account to Mr. Prevost which had been heard by Lord H——. The former, however, understanding the Indian better, soon drew from him, partly in English, and partly in Iroquois, the whole particulars of Walter's deliverance.

"And would you really have slain him?" asked Mr. Prevost.

"I would," replied Black Eagle, calmly and firmly. "I would have torn out my own heart had the laws of my people required it!"

The father mused for a few moments, and then said, in a thoughtful tone: "I believe you would. Dear Otaitsa, did she really, then, peril her life to save her young friend?"

"She did more," answered Black Eagle. "She was one of those who prepared to go to the happy hunting grounds with him; but I tell thee, Prevost, not the sight of my child, with the knife in her hand, ready to plunge it into her own heart, made the Black Eagle pause or hesitate. It was that we heard the voice of the Great Spirit in the words that were spoken. He only can change the laws of the Oneida, and He changed them. But now hear me, Prevost, for I must back to my people and thy son. I sent them forward toward the Sounding Waters, while I sought thee, first at thy lodge and then here; and I must join them, for they must not throw a hatchet or fire a rifle without the Black Eagle."

He had seated himself when first he entered, but now he rose and stood erect, as if about to make a speech. "There is a blossom on the bough of the Black Eagle's tree," he said, "which is dear to his eyes, and thou hast a bough on thy tree which is dear to thee. Otaitsa is a Christian—believes in your Good Spirit. She is descended from a race of warriors, every one of whom has left a name in the hearts of their people. She is of the highest race of the highest tribe of the children of the Stone. The blood of the redman is as fine as the blood of the white. Her

mother was the daughter of a great chief, and of a race as good as thine own; a race that is renowned."

Mr. Prevost bent down his head, but he knew the Indian customs too well to interrupt, and the chief went on, saying: "The Blossom loves the Bough; the Bough loves the Blossom. She has purchased him, she has bought him for herself; she has offered her heart's blood for his price. Is he not hers? If the Black Eagle should never return from his war flight, if the bullet of the French should break his wing, or the arrow of the Huron pierce his heart, will his brother Prevost bind the Blossom and the Bough together as the white men bind them, and as the Christian people unite those who love, together? Will he take the Blossom to his own home, and make her indeed his daughter?"

Mr. Prevost rose and threw his arms round the chief, saying: "Thou art my brother. I will do as thou hast said, and may the Good Spirit deal with me as I deal with thee in this matter. Thy daughter is my daughter, my son is thy son. But thou knowest not, perhaps——"

Black Eagle raised his hand, saying in Iroquois: "Forbear! I know what I know; thou knowest what thou knowest. We may believe much that it is not right to prove. Silence is a good thing when secrets are dangerous. Now go I to my people with my heart at rest;" and without more words he glided out of the room.

CHAPTER XXXII

DAY dawned bright and clear over the wild woods, the green savannas, and the lakes and mountains that lay between Horicon or Lake George and the small chain of Indian lakes. The advanced party of the Oneidas were up bustling with the earliest beam—bustling, but in their quiet way. Each was active, clearing away every trace of their sojourn from the face of the savanna as far as possible, and preparing to betake himself to the shade of the neighboring woods; but Sister Bab was still sound asleep. Amongst those who have traveled over that part of the country there may be some who remember a beautiful and rich green meadow, extending for almost a third of a mile from its inland extremity to the shores of Horicon. It has now—and it is not much altered since the time I speak of—a sloping ground to the northward of this grassy plot, well covered with wood, and there is on the south a rocky but still wooded bank, in which several small caves are to be observed. In one of these caves lay the negress, on the morning I have just mentioned, and though the Indians moved about in different directions, and removed even a large iron pot of European workmanship, which had been placed near the entrance of the cavern, the good woman, in the sleep of fatigue and exhaustion, showed no sign whatever of waking.

Few had been the explanations which she had given on the preceding night. She was too weary to indulge in her usual loquacity, and her Indian friend had sat quietly before her, after having supplied all that she required, seeing her eat and drink, but putting no questions.

Now, however, he approached the hollow in the rock, and after gazing at her for an instant as she lay, he moved her with his moccasined foot. She started up and rubbed her eyes, looking round with evident surprise; but the Indian said: "Get up and follow into the woods, if thou wouldst see the Black Eagle. We must leave the ground that has no shadow, now that the day has come."

"Ah, me!" cried Sister Bab. "What shall I do for my poor Missy? She is a prisoner with the French, not more than a few miles hence, and, what is worse still, the Woodchuck is with her, and all our people said he was going to give himself up to save Massa Walter."

Quietly and deliberately the Indian seated himself on the ground, and remained silent for a moment or two. He then asked, without the slightest appearance of interest: "Where is the daughter of Prevost? Is she at the Castle of the Sounding Waters?"

Sister Bab replied, "No"; and, as far as she could describe it, explained to her companion where Edith was, and gave him no very inaccurate notion of the sort of field-work on which she had stumbled the night before. Still not a muscle of the man's face moved, and he merely uttered a sort of hum at this intelligence, sitting for full two minutes without speaking a word.

"What can we do, brother, to save them?" asked Sister Bab, at length. "I don't think there's any danger indeed, to Missy, or Massa Woodchuck, 'cause the young man in the blue coat seemed very civil; but den if Massa Woodchuck not get away, your people will kill Massa Walter, for six months will be over very soon."

"Five days ago six moons had grown big and small since the Black Eagle spoke," said the Indian, gravely. "But we will see whether there be not a trail the prisoners can tread. You must get up and walk before me to where you left them, like a cloud upon the mountain side, quickly, but without noise."

"It's a long way," said the poor woman, "and my feet are all cut and torn with yesterday's ramble."

"We will give thee moccasins," answered the Indian. "The way is not long, even to the house of the Sounding Waters, if you keep the trail straight. Thou must show me if thou wouldst save Prevost's daughter. Her fate is like a toppling stone upon the edge of a precipice—a wind may blow it down. The French Hurons do not spare women. Come, get up; eat, and talk not! I must know this place, and that quickly!"

The last words were spoken somewhat sternly; and Sister Bab rose up and followed to one of the little groups of Indians, where she seated herself again, and ate some cakes of maize, and dried deer's flesh, while the chief who had been speaking with her held a consultation with several of the other warriors. Not much time was allowed her for her meal, for in less than five minutes she was called upon to lead the way, and, followed by a party of six Indians, she proceeded for a mile or two, till they reached a spot where the trail divided into two. She was about to take the left-hand path, knowing that it was the one which she had followed on the preceding night, but the chief commanded her, in a low voice, to turn her steps upon the other, adding: "We shall come upon thy foot-prints again speedily."

So indeed it proved, for she had wandered during the night far from the direct course; and after walking on for some ten minutes they cut into the former path again, where to Indian eyes the traces of a negro foot were very apparent.

Twice the same thing occurred, and thus the distance was shortened to nearly one-half of that which she had traveled on the preceding night, between the little masked redoubt of the French and the Indian camping place.

At length the objects which Sister Bab saw around her gave warning that she was approaching the spot of which they were in search. From time to time Mount Defiance

was seen towering upon the right, and the character of the shrubs and trees was changed. The first hint sufficed to make the Indians adopt much greater precautions than those which they had previously used. They spread wide from the broad trail, the chief taking Sister Bab with him, and slowly and noiselessly they pursued their way, taking advantage of every tree and every rock to hide behind and gaze around.

Before five minutes more were over, Sister Bab paused suddenly and pointed forward. The Indian gazed in silence. To an unpracticed eye nothing would have been apparent to excite the slightest suspicion of a neighboring enemy, but some of the pine branches of what seemed a low copse in front were a shade yellower than the other trees. Besides, they did not take the forms of young saplings. They were rounder, less tapering, without showing shoot or peak.

A grin came upon the Indian's countenance, and pointing with his finger to the ground he seemed, without words, to direct the negress to remain on the same spot where she stood, behind a great butternut tree. He then looked round him for his companions, but their movements were well combined and understood. Though at some distance from each other, each eye from time to time had been turned toward him as they advanced; and the moment it was perceived that he stopped, each of the others stopped, also. His raised hand brought them all creeping quietly toward him, and then, after a few whispered words, each Indian sank down upon the ground, and creeping along like a snake, disappeared amongst the bushes.

Sister Bab found her situation not altogether pleasant. The slightest possible rustle in the leaves was heard as her dusky companions disappeared, but then all sounds ceased, except from time to time, when the wind, which had risen a little, bore her some murmurs from the redoubt, as if of voices speaking. Once she caught a few notes of a merry air, whistled by lips that were probably soon

after doomed to everlasting silence. But that was all she heard, and the stillness grew oppressive to her. After waiting for a moment or two, she sought a deeper shelter than the butternut tree afforded, and crept amongst some thick shrubs at the foot of a large oak. She thought her Indian companions would never return, but at length one of the redmen looked out from the bushes, and then another, and both gazed round as if in search of her. Following their example, she crept forth, and the chief, approaching, beckoned her away, without speaking.

When far enough off to be quite certain that no sound of voices could reach the redoubt, he stopped suddenly and gazed in her face, saying: "You love the daughter of the paleface; you followed her when there was danger. Will you go where there is no danger, to bear her the words of warning?"

"I will go anywhere to do her any good," answered the woman, warmly. "I am not afraid of danger. I had enough of it yesterday to make me careless of it to-day."

"Well, then," said the chief, "thou seest this trail to the left. Follow it till it crosses another. Then take to the right on the one it crosses—it is a broad trail, thou canst not miss it. It will lead thee straight into the Frenchman's ambush. They will not hurt thee. Ask for the daughter of the paleface Prevost. Tell them thou hast passed the night in the woods, seeking for her, and they will let thee stay with her. Say to her she shall have deliverance before the sun has set to-morrow, but tell her when she hears the war-whoop and the shot of the rifle to cast herself down flat on the ground beneath the earth heap, if she be near at the time. She knows the Oneida people; she can tell their faces from the Hurons, though the war paint be bright upon them. She need not fear them. Tell her secretly, when none hears; and what I tell her to do, do thou, if thou wouldst save thy life!"

"But," said Bab, with more foresight than the Indian,

"perhaps they will not keep her there till to-morrow. They may send her into the fort—most likely will."

"Bid her stay! bid her stay!" said the chief. "If they force her away, I have no arm to hold her. Go on! I have said!"

The negress shook her head, as if much doubting the expediency of the plan proposed, but she obeyed without further remonstrance, and walking on upon the little narrow path which the Indians pointed out, she reached, in about a quarter of an hour, the broader trail, along which Edith had been taken on the preceding night. Turning to the right, as directed, she followed it with slow and somewhat hesitating steps, till suddenly a sharp turn brought her in sight of two sentinels pacing backward and forward, and a group of Indians seated on the ground round a fire, cooking their food. There she halted suddenly, but she was already seen, and receiving no answer to his challenge, one of the sentinels presented his musket as if to fire. At the same moment a voice exclaimed: "What's that? What's that?" in French, and a man in the garb of a soldier, but unarmed, came forward and spoke to her.

She could make no reply, for she did not understand a word he said, and taking her by the wrist, the man led her into the redoubt, saying to the sentinel with a laugh: "It's only a black woman; did you take her for a bear?"

The next instant poor Bab beheld her young mistress quietly seated on the ground, with a fine white tablecloth spread before her, and all the appurtenances of a breakfast table, though not the table itself, while the officer she had seen in the redoubt the night before was applying himself assiduously to supply her with all she wanted. In a moment the good woman had shaken her wrist from the man who held it, and darting forward, she caught Edith's hand and smothered it with kisses.

Great was Edith's joy and satisfaction to see poor Bab still in life, and it was soon explained to the French offi-

cer who she was and how she came thither. But the object of her coming had nearly been frustrated before she had time to explain to her young mistress the promised rescue; for ere she had been half an hour within the works a non-commissioned officer from Ticonderoga appeared with a despatch for the commander of the party, who at once proposed to send the young lady and her dark attendant under his charge to the fortress, expressing gallantly his regret to lose the honor and pleasure of her society; but adding that it would be for her convenience and safety.

The suggestion was made before he opened the despatch, and Edith eagerly caught at a proposal which seemed to offer relief from a very unpleasant situation; but as soon as the officer had seen the contents of his letter his views were changed, and he explained to his young prisoner that for particular reasons the commander-in-chief thought it best that there should be as little passing to and fro, during the period of daylight, between the fortress and the redoubt as possible. He would, therefore, he said, be obliged to inform his superior officer, in the first place, of her being there, and of the circumstances in which she had fallen under his protection, as he termed it, adding that probably after nightfall, when the same objection could not exist, he would receive instructions as to what was to be done, both with herself and her companions, and with the Indians in whose power he had found her.

He then sat down to write a reply to the despatch he had received, and occupied fully half an hour in its composition, during which time all that Sister Bab had to say was spoken. The very name of the Oneidas, however, awakened painful memories in Edith's breast, and notwithstanding all the assurances she had received from Otaitsa, her heart sank at the thought of poor Walter's probable fate. She turned her eyes toward Woodchuck, who had refused to take any breakfast, and sat apart under a tree not far from the spot where Apukwa and his companions, kept in sight constantly by a sentinel, were gath-

ered round their cooking fire. His attitude was the most melancholy that can be conceived; his eyes were fixed upon the ground, his head drooping, his brow heavy and contracted, and his hands clasped together on his knee. Edith moved quietly toward him and seated herself near, saying: "What is the matter, my good friend?" and then added, in a low voice: "I have some pleasant news for you."

Woodchuck shook his head sadly, but made no answer; and Edith continued, seeking to cheer him: "The poor negro woman who was with me when we were attacked escaped the savages, it seems, and has brought an intimation that before to-morrow's sunset we shall be set free by a large party of the Oneidas."

"It is too late, my dear! It is too late!" replied Woodchuck, pressing his hands tightly together. "Too late to do anything for your poor brother! It was him I was thinking of!"

"But there are still four or five days of the time," said Edith, "and——"

"I've been a fool, Miss Prevost," replied Woodchuck, bitterly, "and there's no use of concealing it from you. I have mistaken moons for months. The man who brought me the news of what that stern old devil Black Eagle had determined, said the time allowed was six months, and I never thought of the Indians counting their months by moons till I heard those Honontkoh saying something about it this morning. No, no, it's all useless now! It's all useless!"

Edith turned deathly pale, and remained so for a moment or two, but then she lifted her eyes to a spot of the blue sky shining through the trees above, and with a deep sigh she answered: "We must trust in God, then, and hope He has provided other and less terrible means. He can protect and deliver according to His will, without the aid or instrumentality of man. You have done your best, Woodchuck, and your conscience should rest satisfied."

"No! no!" he answered, bitterly. "If I had but thought of what I knew quite well, I should have gone a fortnight sooner, and the poor boy would have been saved. It's all the fault of my stupid mistake. A man should make no mistakes in such emergencies, Miss Edith!"

He fell into a fit of thought again, and seeing that all attempt to comfort him was vain, Edith returned to the side of the black woman, and inquired eagerly if she had heard any tidings of Walter amongst the Oneidas.

Sister Bab was more cautious than poor Woodchuck had been, however, and denied stoutly having heard anything; adding that she could not think they had done any harm to her young "massa," or they would not be so eager to help her young "missy."

The smallest gleam of hope is always a blessing; but still the day passed sadly enough to poor Edith. The commandant of the redoubt was occupied with military business which she did not comprehend, and which afforded no relief to her thoughts even for a moment. She saw the soldiers parading, the sentinels relieved, the earthworks inspected, and the Indians harangued, without one thought being withdrawn from the painful circumstances of her own fate.

Shortly after dusk, however, the same sergeant who had brought the despatch in the morning appeared with another letter, which the French commandant read, and then carried to Edith in the little hut where she was seated, with her lamp just trimmed and lighted. "The Marquis of Montcalm informs Captain Le Comtois that it will be greatly inconvenient to receive any additional mouths into Fort Carillon. Should he think fit, he can send the lady who has fallen into his hands, with the English gentleman, her companion, back to Crown* Point or Fort St. Frederick, as early to-morrow as he thinks fit. If the lady

* I am told that the Fort referred to did not receive the name of Crown Point till after its capture by the English; but I find it so called by contemporary English writers.

earnestly prefers to retire to Fort Carillon at once, the Marquis of Montcalm will not be so wanting in courtesy as to refuse; but he begs to warn her that she may be subjected to all the inconveniences of a siege, as he cannot at all tell what course of operations the enemy may think fit to pursue. The Indians, if willing, as they say, to serve may be usefully employed within the redoubt, but with caution, and must not be suffered to operate upon the flanks, as usual."

"It is for you to say, mademoiselle," said Monsieur Le Comtois, "whether you will now go to the fort or not."

Edith, however, declined, saying that the reasons given by Monsieur de Montcalm were quite sufficient to induce her to remain till it was convenient to send her elsewhere; and thus ended that eventful week. The following day was Sunday, a day not fit to be desecrated by human strife, but one which was destined to behold, on that very spot, one of those bloody scenes which write man's shame in letters of blood upon the page of history.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE day was intensely hot, the wind nearly southwest, the sky deep blue toward the horizon, but waning to a hazy gold color in the zenith, when, at an early hour on the Saturday morning, the great flotilla of General Abercrombie got under way. One large boat, modeled like a whaleboat, and so designated in contemporary accounts, led the way, with the active and energetic second in command, accompanied by a portion of his own regiment. The rest followed, spreading out in the shape of an irregular wedge over the face of the lake, and the whole steered at once directly toward the narrows. Fresh, and peaceful, and beautiful was the scene upon that loveliest of lakes, with the wild mountains and sweeping forests round, and myriads of lovely islands studding the golden waters like gems. Lord H—— sat somewhat reclining on his cloak in the stern of the leading boat, with a telescope in his hand, which, however, he did not use. The scene presented to his eye had sufficient in its general features to afford pleasant occupation to the thoughts, and he strove to turn them, as much as possible, toward objects unconnected with his own fate, or with the fate of the expedition.

Diamond Island was soon passed, Long Island left to the eastward, and the rich, narrow strip of low land extending far into the lake, and known as Long Point, rounded by the boat in which he sat. He gazed back to see how near the others were following, and then looked forward again. French Mountain, Deer Pasture Mountain, Harris' Bay, Dunham's Bay, were left behind, and the Dome Island,

rising up in the midst of the waters like the cupola of some large submerged cathedral, was right in front. Many another islet was seen scattered round, while the peculiar magical effect of the hazy midsummer light made them look hardly real. At length the high, precipitous cliffs known as Shelving Rock, on the one hand, and the Tongue Mountain on the other, were seen in front, announcing the approach to the Narrows, while the top of the Black Mountain appeared dark and grim over the lower land in the foreground.

More caution now became necessary, for hitherto no fear had been entertained that the movements of the flotilla would be discovered by the enemy's scouts; but that part of the lake most frequently swept by the French boats was now at hand, and it became necessary to keep as far inshore as possible, and take advantage of every headland and island as a means of concealment, in order to hide the approach and number of the armament till the last moment.

Still, the general orders having been given, Lord H— lay quiet, and meditated. On an active and energetic spirit the saddest thoughts are most apt to obtrude in moments of forced tranquillity. He could not cast them off. He tried to think of everything that was happy—of Edith, of his speedy union with her who had become the brightness of his life—of pleasant days beyond the sea, far away in their peaceful native land. But still, still, through all the visions he conjured up of hope and happiness, and long, cheerful hours, came chiming, like the tolling of a bell, the sad, prophetic words of the question, "Shall I ever see her more?" and he longed for the moment of landing, to shake off thought in active exertion.

At length it came. The wild, strange scenery of the Buck Mountain and the Rattlesnake Dens was seen upon the left, and, stretching out in front, the low, fertile sweep of land known from that day forward as Sabbath Day Point. There, in the evening, the troops landed for re-

freshment, and the boats were drawn up to the southward, under cover of the banks and woods, with but a few miles' farther voyage on the following day ere they reached the point of attack. Happy are the thoughtless; for though, perhaps, they enjoy not so highly, and their enjoyment is of a lower kind, yet they *can* enjoy each sunshiny hour that God grants them in their course through life. The brief repose, the pleasant meal, the fair and the strange things around, afforded matter for much happiness to many a light heart there, during the halt of the army; but it was not so with Lord H——. He knew that the next day was to be one of great fatigue, difficulty, and exertion; and in order that his corporal powers might be in full activity, he lay down and tried to sleep. But sleep would not come, and he had not closed an eye when, toward midnight, the order was given to form upon the beach and re-embark.

Every one, as well as the young nobleman, felt that to be a solemn moment. The sky was clear and bright, the stars were shining out large and lustrous; not a breeze moved in the sky; the clear waters of the lake were smooth as a sheet of glass; the only sound that stirred the air was the tramp of the troops toward the boats, the whirring insects in the trees, and the wailing voice of the whip-poor-will. All was conducted as silently as possible; the oars of the boats were muffled, and once more Lord H—— led the way with a few bodies of rangers in several bateaux. The regular troops followed in the center of the line, and the volunteers of the provinces formed wings on either side.

Stilly and silently the flight of boats skimmed over the waters, till, after a few hours of solemn darkness, day dawned upon them, revealing to the scouts of Montcalm upon the rocky eminences near the shore the full blaze of the English uniforms in the innumerable boats sweeping down, as if to certain conquest. Somewhat less than one hour more the first boat neared what is called Prisoners'

Island, bore away a little to the westward, where the ground was open, touched the shore, and the young nobleman instantly sprang to land. Regiment after regiment followed. The debarkation was perfectly orderly and uninterrupted, and it was evident that the French garrison of Ticonderoga, if not actually taken by surprise, were attacked much sooner than they had expected.

The number of the Indians with the army was actually small, but it was known that large parties of Mohawks, Oneidas, and even Onondagas, were hovering on the flanks, sweeping, in fact, in a crescent, round that which was then considered the key of Lake Champlain. It was nearly noon before the disembarkation was completed and the army formed into three columns, ready for advance. The first column then plunged into the woods, headed by Lord H—— in person, and pushed on for some way unopposed, except by the difficulties of the road, which at every step became greater and greater, from the number of thick juniper bushes and tangled brushwood which encumbered the ground under the large trees. The men's strength was spent in contending with these natural obstructions, and to give them time to breathe, Lord H—— halted his corps for a moment, at the first open space in the woods which they reached. He himself leaned upon the short ranger's musket which he carried in his hand; his fine, expressive countenance glowing with exercise and eagerness, and beaming encouragement upon the gallant men who followed him on what they fully believed to be the road to victory.

At that moment something was heard plunging through the thick brushwood on the left, and an Indian in his full war costume, painted and armed, burst out into the open space, holding up a piece of paper in his hand. He darted instantly toward the commander of the column, lifting the paper high, and Lord H——, who was just upon the point of giving the order to advance again, paused, and stretched forth his hand. What the man gave him was

not a letter, but apparently merely a leaf torn out of a pocketbook; and the moment it was delivered, the Indian, whose eyes had been gleaming with eagerness, dropped his arms by his side, and stood as still as a statue. Lord H——gazed upon the paper, and beheld, written in pencil, apparently in great haste, the following words:

“There is a masked redoubt in front, as far as I can discover, a little to the east of the brook. It is concealed by low bushes, and the gaps in the underwood are filled up with boughs of pine. Edith is within, a prisoner. Beware! We are marching round rapidly to take it in reverse—I mean the Oneidas. WALTER PREVOST.”

Several of the superior officers had gathered round, and amongst the rest a man deservedly famous in those and after times, then simply known as Major Putnam.

“We have been seen by friends, if not by enemies, Putnam,” said Lord H——, handing him the paper. “What do you advise to be done? You are more skilled in wood warfare than I am?”

“Send back the Indian,” answered Major Putnam. “Let him tell his brethren to advance as speedily as possible and help to clear the woods. Then give me a hundred rangers and a handful of Indians, and I will push on myself and make a way for you.”

“Good!” said Lord H——. “Call up your men, Putnam, while I send away the Indian.”

Beckoning up an interpreter, the young nobleman gave their savage allies directions, telling them particularly to report the exact spot which the column had reached; and by the time this was done and the man gone, Major Putnam had placed himself at the head of his little party, ready to dash on.

“Stay, Putnam!” said Lord H——. “You command, but I go with you!”

Putnam paused and dropped the point of his sword, look-

ing almost aghast. "My lord," he said, "I beg you would forbear. If I am killed, the loss of my life will be of little consequence to anyone, but the preservation of your life is of importance to this army!"

Lord H—— laid his hand upon his arm, saying: "Putnam, your life is as dear to you as mine is to me. I am determined to go. Lead on!"

The next moment they dashed on at quick time along a trail which opened before them. The few Indians who accompanied the party scattered, as usual, to the right and left, and for some little way they made good progress through the tangled wood. At length, however, all, even to the natives, became puzzled by the number of trails crossing each other, and the thick and intricate nature of the wood; but still they forced their way forward, judging the direction they ought to take by the way the shadows of the trees were thrown by the sunshine. Thus for four or five hundred yards they pushed on, without seeing an enemy, when Putnam, suddenly pointing with his sword, exclaimed: "There goes a Frenchman's cap—more of them! more of them! Now, gallant rangers, down with your pieces and make your barrels ring!"

In an instant every gun was leveled; but at the same moment a sharp flash ran along the trees and bushes beyond, the loud report of firearms rattled through the forest, and one of the young officers of the rangers dropped at once. Several privates fell before they could draw the trigger, while the rest were sending a fatal volley into the wood.

"On! on!" cried Putnam. "Clear the copse of them! My lord, what is the matter?"

Lord H—— stood for a moment longer without answering, then wavered for an instant on his feet, and fell back into the arms of a sergeant of the rangers.

"I knew it!" cried Putnam. "Forward, my men! Forward! and avenge this noble fellow!"

CHAPTER XXXIV

VERY different from the array of Abercrombie's army was the march of the Oneidas through the deep woods on the western side of Lake Horicon. Far spread out and separate from each other, they pursued a number of different trails in profound silence, and in single files of not more than twenty or thirty each; and yet, with what seemed a sort of instinct, each party directed its course unerringly to one particular point. They knew the spot they were to strike, they knew the time they were to be there; and at that spot, and at that time, each little band appeared with its most famous warrior at its head. Thus, in the small savanna where the poor negress, Sister Bab, had found the advance guard of the whole nation, nearly six hundred warriors of the children of the Stone assembled on the night of Saturday.

Dressed like themselves, with tomahawk and knife in his belt, and moccasins upon his feet, appeared Walter Prevost, distinguished from the rest by his fair skin and flowing hair. The sports of the field, the wild life he had led for several years, and even the hardships he had lately suffered, had fitted him for all the fatigues of an Indian march, and rendered a frame naturally strong, extraordinarily robust and active. Ignorant of any danger to those he best loved, rejoicing in deliverance from captivity and the peril of death, and full of bright hopes for the future, his heart was light and gay, and happiness added energy to vigor. The hardy warriors with whom he marched saw with surprise and admiration the son of the paleface bear difficulties and fatigues as well as themselves, and come in at the close of the day as fresh and cheerful.

The fires were lighted, the rifles piled near to each separate band, and the food which they brought with them cooked after their fashion and distributed amongst them. But the meal was not over ere another small band joined them; and Black Eagle himself passed round the different fires, till he paused by that at which Walter was seated. None of his own people had taken any notice of his appearance. Once or twice one of the warriors, indeed, looked up as he went by; but no sign of reverence or recognition was given, till Walter, after the European fashion, rose and extended his hand.

"Thou art before me, my son," said the chief. "The wings of the Black Eagle have had far to fly. I have visited thy father's lodge, and have followed him to the new Castle at the midday end of Horicon."

"My father!" said Walter, in great surprise. "Was he not at his house?"

"Nay. He is a war chief with the army," said Black Eagle.

"Then where is Edith?" inquired the young man. "Did you leave the Blossom with her?"

"I left Otaitsa at thy father's house," answered the chief, "but thy sister was not there."

"Where was she, then?" asked Walter, with some alarm.

"I know not," answered Black Eagle, and was silent.

"Perhaps he has taken her to Albany," rejoined the young man. "But you saw my father; how did he fare?"

"Well," answered Black Eagle; "quite well; and he gives thee to Otaitsa. The Blossom is thine."

"Then Edith is safe," said Walter, in a tone of relief, "and my father's mind must have been relieved about me, for he could not be well or seem well if either of his children were in danger."

"The redman feels as much as the white man," answered Black Eagle, "but he leaves tears and lamentations, sighs, and sad looks to women and to children. Where is the Night Hawk and the warriors who were with him?"

"They are on before," replied the youth; "we have not seen them, but their fires have been lighted here."

No further questions were asked by the chief, and walking slowly away, he seated himself with those who had accompanied him, to partake of the meal they were making ready. Few words were spoken amongst the various groups assembled there, and some twenty minutes had elapsed when one of the young men seated at the fire with the Black Eagle started up and darted away toward the north like a frightened deer. No one took any notice, and several soon after composed themselves to sleep. The others sat round their fires, with their heads bent down almost to their knees, and the murmur of a few sentences spoken here and there was the only sound that broke the silence for nearly an hour. At the end of that time two young warriors on the north side of the savanna started up and listened, and shortly after, several of the Oneidas who had rested in the neighborhood of the same spot the night before, were seen coming through the long grass and crossing the tiny brook which meandered through the midst.

Led by the young messenger who had lately departed to seek for them, they glided up to the fire of the great chief and seated themselves beside him. The conversation then grew earnest, and quick and eager gestures and flashing eyes might be seen.

The great body of the Oneidas took not the slightest notice of what was taking place around the council fire of the Black Eagle, but Walter watched every look with an indefinable feeling of interest and curiosity; and after much discussion, and many a long pause between, the chief beckoned him up and made him sit in the circle.

"Thou art young to talk with warriors," said the Black Eagle, when he was seated; "thy hand is strong against the panther and the deer, but it has never taken the scalp of an enemy. But the daughter of the white man Prevost is my daughter, and she is thy sister. Know, then, my son, that she is in the power of the French. The Ho-

nontkoh whom we have expelled—they are wolves—they have taken her—they have run her down as a hungry pack runs down a fawn, and have delivered her and themselves into the hands of the enemy. The muzzles of their rifles have fire for our bosoms; their knives are thirsty for our scalps. Be not a woman, who cannot hear with a calm eye or limbs that are still; but sit and listen, and then prove thyself a warrior in the fight.”

He then went on to repeat all that he had just heard from the chief who had succored the poor negress on the preceding night, and all that had been done since.

“The Night Hawk was right,” he said, “to send word that we would deliver thy sister, for she is a daughter of the Oneida. The story also of the Dark Cloud is true, for the children of the Stone have caused search to be made, and they have found the horses that were lost and the body of the man they slew. They scalped him not, it is true, for what is the scalp of a negro worth? but the print of the tomahawk was between his eyes.”

“Let me have a horse,” cried Walter, “and I will bring her out of the midst of them!”

“The swallow flies faster than the Eagle,” said the chief, “but where is his strength? Listen, boy, to the words that come forth from many years. Thy sister must be delivered; but our brethren, the English, must know of this ambush, lest they fall into it. So, too, shall she be saved more surely. Draw, then, upon paper the history of the thing, and send it to the great chief, thy friend, the Falling Cataract. I will find a messenger who knows him. Then will we break in upon this ambush at the same time with the English, and the scalps of the Honontkoh shall hang upon the war post, for they are not the children of the Stone; they spat upon their mother. One of the horses, too, shalt thou have to save thy sister out of the fight, if a thing with four feet can run easily in this forest.”

“There is the great trail from the setting sun to the place of the Sounding Waters,” said the Night Hawk; “a

horse can run there as well as a deer. It passes close by the back of the hiding place of the Frenchman."

"Let me hear," said Walter, mastering his emotion, and striving to imitate the calm manner of the Indians, "let me hear where this hiding place is, and what it is like. The white man, though he be but young, knows the ways of the white man best, and he may see light where older eyes fail."

In language obscured by figures, but otherwise clear and definite, the Night Hawk described the masked redoubt of the French and its position.

Ignorant of the ground around the fortress, Walter could form but an insufficient judgment of the spot where it was situated; but the form and nature of the work he comprehended well enough. He mused in silence for a minute or two after the chief had spoken, giving the Black Eagle good hope of his acquiring, in time, the Indian coolness, and then he said: "It would be better for us, while the army attacks the redoubt in front, to take it in reverse."

"What meanest thou, my son?" asked Black Eagle, for Walter, still busy with his own thoughts, had spoken in English.

The young man explained his meaning more clearly in the Iroquois tongue, showing that as the enemy's position was, probably from want of time, only closed on three sides, it would be easy for an Indian party, by making a circuit, to come upon the rear of the French, unless some considerable body of natives were thrown out upon their western flank. But the Night Hawk nodded his head slowly, with a look of approbation, saying: "The Hurons are dogs, and creep close to the bowl of their masters. They are all within the stones or the mounds of earth, except those watching by the side of Horicon. The Night Hawk has skimmed over the ground toward the setting sun, and there was no print of a moccasin upon the trail."

"Thou hast the cunning of a warrior, when thou art calm," said Black Eagle, addressing Walter, "and it shall

be as thou hast said. We will spring upon the back of the game; but let the Falling Cataract know quickly. Hast thou the means? He will not understand the belt of wampum, and knows not the tongue of the Oneida."

"I can find means," said Walter, taking from the pouch he carried a pencil and an old pocketbook; "but where will thy messenger find him, my father?"

"He is not far," answered the chief. "He sailed to-day from the midday toward the cold wind, with the war party of the English. I watched them from the black mountains, and they are a mighty people. They floated on Horicon like a string of swans, and their number upon the blue waters was like a flight of passage pigeons upon the sky when they travel westward. They landed where the earth becomes a lizard, by the rattlesnake dens. But how long they may tarry who shall say? Send quickly, then!"

Walter had been writing on his knee while the chief spoke, and the brief note, which we have already seen delivered, was speedily finished. A messenger was then chosen for his swiftness of foot, and dispatched at once to the point where the English army first landed. When he returned all was still amongst the Oneidas, and the warriors, with but few exceptions, were sleeping in the long grass. The news he brought, however, soon roused the drowsiest. The English flotilla had gone on, he said. He had found but a solitary canoe with a few Mohawks, who told him that the battle would be on the following morning. Every warrior was on his feet in a moment; their light baggage and arms were snatched up in haste. One party was detached to the east, to watch the movements of the army; another messenger was chosen and sent to bear the letter, and ere half an hour had gone by the dusky bands were once more moving silently through the dark paths of the forest, only lighted from time to time by glimpses of the moon, and directed by the well-known stars which had so often guided their fathers through the boundless wilderness.

CHAPTER XXXV

CALM and bright, and beautiful, the Sabbath morning broke over the woody world around Edith Prevost. Through the tall pine trees left standing within the earthworks the rosy light streamed sweetly; and though no birds deserving the name of songsters inhabit the forests of America, yet many a sweet, short note saluted the rising day.

Edith, with her good negro woman lying near, had slept more soundly than she had hoped for, but she was awake with the first ray, and rousing her dark companion, she said: "We must not forget that this is Sunday, Bab. Call in our good friend Woodchuck, and we will pray before all the noise and bustle of the day begins. I am sure he will be glad to do so."

"But you have no book, Missy," answered the woman.

"That matters not," said the beautiful girl. "I know almost all the prayers by heart, from reading them constantly."

Sister Bab opened the little hurdle door and looked round. She could not see the person she sought. Three sentinels were pacing to and fro at different points; one man was rousing himself slowly from the side of an extinguished fire; but all the rest within sight were fast asleep. It was useless for Sister Bab to ask the neighboring sentinel any questions, and she looked round in vain.

"He has most likely gone to sleep in one of the huts," said Edith, when the woman told her Woodchuck was not to be seen. "We will not wait for him;" and closing the door again, she knelt and prayed with the poor negress by her side.

It was a great comfort to her, for her heart that day was sad, perhaps from the memory of many a Sabbath with those she loved, and the contrast of those days with her situation at the time; perhaps from the uncertainty of her brother's fate; and doubtless, too, the thought that every rising sun brought nearer the hour when a parent and a lover were to be exposed to danger, perhaps to death, had its weight, likewise. But she was that day very sad, and prayer was a relief—a blessing.

Before she had concluded, a good deal of noise and turmoil was heard without; voices speaking sharply, calls such as Edith had not heard before, and in a moment after, the door of the hut opened—for it had no latch—and Monsieur Le Comtois appeared, inquiring if she had seen anything of her English companion.

“No, indeed,” replied Edith. “I sent my servant out to seek for him half an hour ago, but she could not find him, and I concluded he was in one of the huts.”

The Frenchman stamped his foot upon the ground, and, forgetting his usual politeness, uttered some hasty and angry words, implying a belief that Edith knew very well where Woodchuck was, and had aided his escape. The beautiful girl drew herself up with an air of dignity, and replied: “You make me feel, sir, that I am a prisoner. But you mistake me greatly. I do not permit myself to speak falsely on any occasion. If he has escaped you—and I trust he has—I knew nothing of it.”

“I beg your pardon, mademoiselle,” replied the officer, “but this to me is a very serious matter. I may be subjected to the severest military punishment for this unfortunate affair. It was of the utmost importance that the existence of this post should be kept a secret. The utmost precautions have been taken to keep its existence concealed, even from the forces in Fort Carillon; and now this man is at large, to bear the intelligence to the enemy. This must excuse a little heat. How he has escaped, it is impossible to divine, for I ordered him to be kept in sight by

the sentinels continually, as well as the Indians who came with you. He must be worse than an Indian, for they are all safe and quiet enough, but he has disappeared, though the sentinel swears he passed him sleeping on the ground, under the great pine tree, not an hour ago."

"Half an hour ago he certainly was gone," replied Edith, "for the servant went to look for him and could not find him."

"He may be still in the bushes," said the French officer. "I will send out a party to search;" and he turned from the door of the hut.

Edith followed a step or two to see the result; but hardly had Monsieur Le Comtois given his orders, in obedience to which about a dozen men issued forth, some clambering over the breastworks, some running round by the flanks, when a French officer, brilliantly dressed, rode into the redoubt, followed by a mounted soldier, and Edith retired into the hut again.

Le Comtois saluted the newcomer reverently, and the other gave a hasty glance around, saying: "Get your men under arms as speedily as possible. On the maintenance of this post and the two abattis depends the safety of the fortress. I trust, then, to the honor of French gentlemen, and the faith of our Indian allies. Neither will tarnish the glory of France or their own renown by yielding a foot of ground while they can maintain it."

He spoke aloud, so as to make his voice heard all over the enclosure; but then, bending down his head till it was close to Le Comtois' ear, he added, in a low tone, almost a whisper: "The English are within sight. Their first boats are disembarking the troops. Monsieur de Levi, with our reinforcements, has not appeared. All depends upon maintaining the outposts till he can come up. This, sir, I trust to you with full confidence, as a brave man and an experienced soldier. I must now visit the other posts. Farewell! Remember, the glory of France is in your hands!"

Thus saying, he rode away, and the bustle of instant

preparation spread through the little fort. The French soldiers were drawn up within the breastworks, and the stores and ammunition gathered together near the center of the open space, so as to be readily available whenever they were wanted. Two parties of Hurons were placed upon the flanks, so as to be ready to rush out with the tomahawk the moment opportunity offered. Next came the long lines of French muskets; and in the center of the longest face of the breastwork were placed Apukwa and his companions, with their rifles in their hands, and a small party of French soldiers forming a second line behind them, thus insuring their faith, and rendering the fire from the center more fierce. Their presence, indeed, was needed at the moment, for the men who had been sent out in pursuit of Woodchuck had either mistaken the order not to go far, or had lost their way, and they had not reappeared when the whole preparations were complete.

These had occupied some time, although Monsieur Le Comtois had shown all the activity and precision of a thorough soldier, giving his orders rapidly, but coolly and clearly, and correcting every error as soon as made. The Indians, indeed, gave him the greatest embarrassment, for they were too eager for the fight, and—never subjected to military discipline—were running hither and thither to the points they thought most advantageous, without consideration of the general arrangements.

The Frenchman found time, however, for a few courteous words to Edith. "I am greatly embarrassed, my dear young lady," he said, "by your presence here, as we expect to be attacked every instant. I wish to heaven Monsieur de Montcalm had taken you away with him; but in the hurry of the moment I did not think of it, and I have no means of sending you away now; and besides, the risk to yourself would be still greater than staying here. I believe you are as safely posted in this hut as anywhere. It is near enough to the breastwork to be protected from the fire of

the enemy, but you may as well lie down upon the bearskin if you hear musketry."

"Could I not place myself actually under the breast-work?" asked Edith, remembering the instructions sent to her.

"Impossible!" replied the officer. "That space is all occupied by the soldiers and Indians. You are better here. If we should be driven back—which God forbid!—you will be safe, as you speak English, and can say who you are; but remember, address yourself to an officer, for the canaille get mad in time of battle; and on no account trust an Indian!"

"I speak the Iroquois tongue," answered Edith.

"My dear young lady, there is no trusting them," said the officer. "Friends or enemies are the same to them when their blood's hot; all they want is a scalp, and that they will have. It would be terrible to see your beautiful tresses hanging at an Indian's belt."

As he spoke, one of the men who had been sent forth after Woodchuck, came running up, exclaiming: "They are coming, mon capitan! They are coming!"

"Who?" demanded Le Comtois, briefly.

"The redcoats—the English!" said the man. "I saw their advance guard with my own eyes. They are not two hundred yards distant."

"Where are your companions?" asked Le Comtois. "We want every musket!"

"I don't know," answered the man. "They have lost their way, I fancy, as I did. I saw two amongst the bushes just in front, trying to get back."

"Sacre Di! They will discover us!" said the captain; and, running forward, he jumped upon the parapet just behind one of the highest bushes, and looked over. The next instant he sprang down again, saying in a low tone to the corporal near him: "Stand to your arms! Present! Pass the word along not to fire, whatever you see, till I give the order!"

At the same moment he made a sign with his hand to the renegade Oneidas, but probably they did not see it, for their keen black eyes were all eagerly bent forward, peeping through the bushes, which now seemed agitated at some little distance. A moment after a straggling shot or two was heard, and instantly the Honontkoh fired. The order was then given by Le Comtois, and the whole front poured forth a volley, which was returned by a number of irregular shots, blazing out of the bushes in front.

Then succeeded a silence of a few moments, and then a loud cheer, such as none but Anglo-Saxon lungs have ever given.

Edith sat, deathly pale and trembling, in the hut; but it is not too much to say that but a small portion of her terror was for herself. The battle had begun—the battle in which father and lover were to risk life, in which, amidst all the human beings destined to bleed and die that day, her love singled out two, while her fancy painted them as the aim of every shot. It was of them she thought, much more than of herself.

The door of the hut was turned, as I have shown, toward the inside of the square; and Captain Le Comtois had left it open behind him. Thus, as Edith sat a little toward one side of the entrance, she had a view of one side of the redoubt, along which were posted a few French soldiers and a considerable body of Hurons. The firing was soon resumed, but in a somewhat different manner from before. There were no longer any volleys, but frequent, repeated, almost incessant shots, sometimes two or three together, making almost one sound. Thrice she saw a French soldier carried across the open space and laid down at the foot of a tree. One remained quite still where he had been placed; one raised himself for a moment upon his arm, and then sank down again; and Edith understood the signs full well. Clouds of bluish-white smoke then began to roll over the redoubt and curl along as the very gentle wind carried it toward the broad trail by which

she had been brought thither. The figures of the Indians became indistinct, and looked like beings seen in a dream. But still the firing continued, drawing, apparently, more toward the western side; still the rattle of the musketry was mingled with loud cheers from without. But suddenly those sounds were crossed, as it were, by a wild yell such as Edith had only heard once in her life before, but which now seemed to issue from a thousand throats instead of a few. It came from the northwest, right in the direction of the broad trail. The French soldiers and the Hurons who had been kneeling to fire over the breastwork, sprang upon their feet, looked round, and from that side, too, burst forth at once the war-whoop.

"Oh, Missy! Missy! Let us run!" cried Sister Bab, catching Edith's wrist.

"Hush! hush! Be quiet!" said the young lady. "These may be friends coming!"

As she spoke, pouring on like a dark torrent, was seen a crowd of dusky forms rushing along the trail, emerging from amongst the trees, spreading rapidly over the ground, and amidst them all a tall youth, equipped like an Indian, and mounted on a gray horse, which Edith recognized as her own. The sight confused and dazzled her. Feathers, and plumes, and war paints, rifles, and tomahawks, and knives, grim countenances and brandished arms, swam before her, like the things that fancy sees for a moment in a cloud, while still the awful war-whoop rang horribly around, drowning even the rattle of the musketry, and seeming to rend the ear. Two figures only were distinct; the youth upon the horse, and the towering figure of Black Eagle himself, close to the lad's side.

Attacked in flank, and front, and rear, the French and Hurons were broken in a moment, driven from the breastworks, beaten back into the center of the square, and separated into detached bodies. But still they fought with desperation; still the rifles and the muskets pealed; still the cheer, and the shout, and the war-whoop resounded on

the air. A large party of the French soldiery were cast between the huts and the Oneidas, and the young man on the horse strove in vain, tomahawk in hand, to force his way through.

But there are episodes in all combats, and even a pause took place when the gigantic Huron chief rushed furiously against the Black Eagle. It may be that they were ancient enemies, but, at all events, each seemed animated with the fury of a fiend. Each cast away his rifle, and betook himself to the peculiar weapons of his race—the knife and the tomahawk; but it is impossible to describe, it was almost impossible to see the two combatants, such was their marvelous rapidity. Now here, now there, they turned, the blows seeming to fall like hail, the limbs writhing and twisting, the weapons whirling and flashing round. Each was the giant of his tribe, each its most renowned warrior, and each fought for more than life, the closing act of a great renown. But the sinewy frame of the Black Eagle seemed to prevail over the more bulky strength of his opponent; the Huron lost ground, he was driven back to the great pine tree near the center of the square; he was forced round and round it; the knife of the Black Eagle drank his blood, but missed his heart, and only wounded him in the shoulder.

Those nearest the scene had actually paused for a moment in the contest, to witness the fierce single combat going on; but in other parts of the square the bloody fight was still continued. For an instant the French party in the front of the huts, by desperate efforts, seemed likely to overpower the Oneidas before them. A tall French grenadier bayoneted the Night Hawk before Edith's eyes, and then, seeing the great Huron chief staggering under the blows of his enemy, he dashed forward, and, not daring in the rapid whirls of the two combatants, to use his bayonet there, he struck the Black Eagle on the head with the butt of his musket. The blow fell with tremendous force, and drove the old chief to his knee, with one hand

upon the ground. His career seemed over, his fate finished. The Huron raised his tomahawk high to strike, the Frenchman shortened his musket to pin the Black Eagle to the earth. But at that moment a broad, powerful figure dropped down at once from the branches of the pine tree above, between the Oneida and the grenadier—bent slightly with his fall, but even in rising, lifted a rifle to his shoulder, and sent the ball into the Frenchman's heart. With a yell of triumph, Black Eagle sprang up from the ground, and in an instant his tomahawk was buried in the undefended head of his adversary.

Edith beheld not the close of the combat, for in the swaying to and fro of the fierce struggle the French soldiery had by this time been driven past the huts, and the eye of one who loved her was upon her.

"Edith! Edith!" cried the voice of Walter Prevost, forcing the horse forward through the struggling groups, amid shots, and shouts, and falling blows. She saw him, she recognized him, she stretched forth her arms toward him; and, dashing between the two parties, Walter forced the horse up to the door of the hut and caught her hand.

"Spring up! Spring up!" he cried, bending down, and casting his arm around her. "This is not half over. I must carry you away!"

Partly lifted, partly leaping from the ground, Edith sprang up before him; and, holding her tightly to his heart, Walter turned the rein and dashed away, through friends and enemies, trampling, unconscious of what he did, alike on the dead and the dying. The western side of the square was crowded with combatants, and he directed his horse's head toward the east, reached the angle, and turned sharp round to get in the rear of the English column, which was seen forcing its way onward to support the advance party of Major Putnam. He thought only of his sister, and, pressing her closer to his heart, he said: "We are safe, Edith! We are safe!"

Alas! he spoke too soon. There had been one group in

the square that stood almost aloof from the combat. Gathered together in the southeastern angle, Apukwa and his companions seemed watching an opportunity for flight. But their fierce eyes had seen Walter, and twice had a rifle been discharged at him from that spot, but without effect. They saw him snatch his sister from the hut, place her on the horse, and gallop round. Apukwa, the brother of the Snake, and two others, jumped upon the parapet, and scarcely had he uttered the words, "We are safe!" when the fire blazed at once from the muzzles of their rifles. One ball whistled by his ear, and another passed through his hair. But clasping Edith somewhat closer, he galloped on, and in two minutes after came to a spot where three or four men were standing, and one kneeling, with his hand under the head of a British officer, who had fallen. Walter reined up the horse sharply, for he was almost over them before he saw them; but the sight of the features of the dead man drew from his lips the sudden exclamation of "Good God!" They were those of Lord H——.

Edith's face, as Walter held her, had been turned toward him, and he fancied that she rested her forehead on his bosom to shut out the terrible sights around. Her forehead was resting there still, but over the arm that held her so closely to his heart Walter saw welling a dark red stream of blood. He trembled like a leaf. "Edith!" he said, "Edith!" There was no answer. He pushed the bright brown curls back from her forehead, and as he did so the head fell back, showing the face as pale as marble. She had died without a cry, without a sound.

Walter bent his head, and kissed her cheek, and wept.

"What is the matter, sir?" said the surgeon, rising from beside the body of Lord H——. "Did you know my lord?"

"Look here!" said Walter.

It was all he said, but in an instant they gathered round him, and lifted Edith from the horse. The surgeon put his hand upon the wrist, then shook his head sadly; and they laid her gently by the side of Lord H——; they knew



He trembled like a leaf. "Edith!" he said, "Edith!" There was no answer. She had died without a cry. Page 374.

—*Ticonderoga.*

not with how much propriety—but thus she would have loved to rest.

Thus they met, and thus they parted; thus they loved, and thus they died. But in one thing they were happy—that neither, at their last hour, knew the other's peril or the other's fate.

CHAPTER XXXVI

FROM the bloody field of Ticonderoga Abercrombie retreated, as is well known, after having in vain attempted to take the inner abattis without cannon, and sacrificed the lives of many hundred gallant men to his own want of self-reliance. I need dwell no more upon the painful subject, but it was a sad day for the whole army, a sad day for the whole province, and a sadder day still for one small domestic circle, when the bodies of the gallant Lord H—— and his beautiful promised bride were brought to rest for a night at the house of Mr. Prevost before they were moved down to Albany. A body of the young nobleman's own regiment carried the coffins by turns; another party followed with arms reversed; but between the biers and the escort walked four men, with hearts as sad as any upon earth. It may seem strange, but none of the four shed a tear. The tall Indian warrior, though he grieved as much as if he had lost a child, had no tears for any earthly sorrow. The fountain in the heart of Mr. Prevost had been dried up by the fiery intensity of his grief. Walter had wept long and secretly, and the pride of manhood would not let him stain his cheeks in the presence of soldiers. Woodchuck's eyes were dry, too, for during six long months he had disciplined his heart to look upon the things of the earth so lightly, that although he grieved for Edith's fate, it was with the sort of sorrow he might have felt to see a beautiful flower trampled down by a rough foot; and there was bright hope, too, mingled with the shadow of his woe, for he said to himself frequently: "They have but parted for to-day to meet in a happier place to-morrow."

As the procession approached the house the servants came forth to meet it, with a young and beautiful girl at their head, clad in the Indian garb. She bore two little wreaths in her hand, one woven of bright spring flowers, the other of dark evergreens; and when the soldiers halted for a moment with their burden, she laid the flowers upon the coffin of Edith, the evergreen upon the soldier's bier. Then turning, with the tears dropping from her eyes, but with no clamorous grief, she walked before them back into the house.

Some four years after, a less painful scene might be beheld at the house of Mr. Prevost. He himself sat in a great chair under the veranda, with his hair become as white as snow, and his head a good deal bowed. Seated on the ground near him was a tall Indian chief, very little changed in appearance, grave, calm, and still as ever. On the step of the veranda sat two young people, a tall, handsome, powerful man, of about one and twenty, and a beautiful girl, whose brown cheek betrayed some mixture of the Indian blood. On the green grass before them, with a black nurse sitting by, was as lovely a child of about two years of age as ever the sun shone upon. They had gathered a number of beautiful flowers, and she was sporting with them with the grace and with the happiness that only children can display or know. The eyes of all were fixed upon her, and they called her Edith.

There was one wanting to that party out of those who had assembled at the door four years before. Woodchuck was no longer there. He had gone where he longed to be. When he felt sickness coming upon him, some two years after the death of Lord H——, he had left the house of Mr. Prevost, which he had lately made his home, and gone, as he said, to wander in the mountains. There he became worse. An Indian runner came down to tell his friends that he was dying; and when Mr. Prevost went

up to see him, he found him in a Seneca lodge, with but a few hours of life before him.

Woodchuck was very glad to see the friendly face near him, and as his visitor bent over him, he said: "I am very much obliged to you for coming, Prevost, for I want to ask you one thing, and that is, to have me buried in the churchyard at Albany, just beside your dear girl. I know it's all nonsense, and that the flesh sees corruption; but still I've a fancy that I shall rest quieter there than anywhere else. If ever there was an angel she was one, and I think her dust must sanctify the ground."

It was his only request, and it was not forgotten.

THE END

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Bush Rancher, The. Harold Bindloss.
Buster, The. William Patterson White.
Butterfly. Kathleen Norris.

Cabbages and Kings. O. Henry.
Callahans and the Murphys. Kathleen Norris.
Calling of Dan Matthews. Harold Bell Wright.
Cape Cod Stories. Joseph C. Lincoln.
Cap'n Dan's Daughter. Joseph C. Lincoln.
Cap'n Eri. Joseph C. Lincoln.
Cap'n Warren's Wards. Joseph C. Lincoln.
Cardigan. Robert W. Chambers.
Carnac's Folly. Sir Gilbert Parker.
Case and the Girl, The. Randall Parrish.
Case Book of Sherlock Holmes, The. A. Conan Doyle.
Cat's Eye, The. R. Austin Freeman.
Celestial City, The. Baroness Orczy.
Certain People of Importance. Kathleen Norris.
Cherry Square. Grace S. Richmond.
Child of the North. Ridgwell Cullum.
Child of the Wild. Edison Marshall.
Club of Masks, The. Allen Upward.
Cinema Murder, The. E. Phillips Oppenheim.
Clouded Pearl, The. Berta Ruck.
Clue of the New Pin, The. Edgar Wallace.
Coming of Cassidy, The. Clarence E. Mulford.
Coming of Cosgrove, The. Laurie Y. Erskine.
Comrades of Peril. Randall Parrish.
Conflict. Clarence Budington Kelland.
Conquest of Canaan, The. Booth Tarkington.
Constant Nymph, The. Margaret Kennedy.
Contraband. Clarence Budington Kelland.
Corsican Justice. J. G. Sarasin.
Cottonwood Gulch. Clarence E. Mulford.
Court of Inquiry, A. Grace S. Richmond.

THE BEST OF RECENT FICTION

Cross Trails. Harold Bindloss.
Crystal Cup, The. Gertrude Atherton.
Cup of Fury, The. Rupert Hughes.
Curious Quest, The. E. Phillips Oppenheim.
Cytherea. Joseph Hergesheimer.
Cy Whittaker's Place. Joseph C. Lincoln.

Dan Barry's Daughter. Max Brand.
Dancing Star. Berta Ruck.
Danger. Ernest Poole.
Danger and Other Stories. A. Conan Doyle.
Daughter of the House, The. Carolyn Wells.
Deep in the Hearts of Men. Mary E. Waller.
Dead Ride Hard, The. Louis Joseph Vance.
Deep Seam, The. Jack Bethea.
Delight. Mazo de la Roche, author of "Jalna."
Depot Master, The. Joseph C. Lincoln.
Desert Healer. E. M. Hull.
Desire of His Life and Other Stories. Ethel M. Dell.
Destiny. Rupert Hughes.
Devil's Paw, The. E. Phillips Oppenheim.
Devil of Pei-Ling, The. Herbert Asbury.
Devonshers, The. Honore Willsie Morrow.
Diamond Thieves, The. Arthur Stringer.
Door of Dread, The. Arthur Stringer.
Door with Seven Locks, The. Edgar Wallace.
Doors of the Night. Frank L. Packard.
Dope. Sax Rohmer.
Double Traitor, The. E. Phillips Oppenheim.
Downey of the Mounted. James B. Hendryx.
Dr. Nye. Joseph C. Lincoln.
Dream Detective. Sax Rohmer.

Emily Climbs. L. M. Montgomery.
Emily of New Moon. L. M. Montgomery.
Empty Hands. Arthur Stringer.
Enchanted Canyon, The. Honore Willsie.
Enemies of Women. Vicente Blasco Ibanez.
Evil Shepherd, The. E. Phillips Oppenheim.
Exile of the Lariat, The. Honore Willsie.
Extricating Obadiah. Joseph C. Lincoln.
Eyes of the World, The. Harold Beil Wright.

Face Cards. Carolyn Wells.
Faith of Our Fathers. Dorothy Walworth Carman.
Fair Harbor. Joseph C. Lincoln.



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